This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

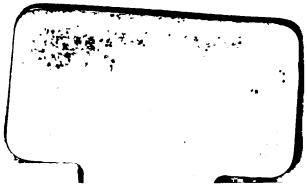
+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

600060515N



THE GOLDEN BAIT.

THE GOLDEN BAIT.

A Novel.

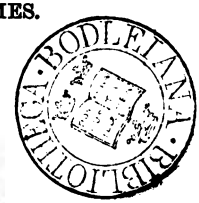
By HENRY HOLL,

AUTHOR OF

"THE KING'S MAIL," "THE OLD HOUSE IN CROSBY SQUARE,"
"MORE SECRETS THAN ONE," "THE WHITE FAVOUR,"
ETC. ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



LONDON:
TINSLEY BROTHERS, 18, CATHERINE STREET, STRAND.
1871.

[*All rights of Translation and Reproduction are reserved.*]

250. g 26.

LONDON :
SAVILL, EDWARDS AND CO., PRINTERS, CHANDOS STREET,
COVENT GARDEN.

To

WILLIAM BEVAN,

ONE OF THE BEST OF THOSE

ON WHOSE KINDNESS WE CAN ALWAYS DEPEND,

AND WHOSE FRIENDSHIP IT IS A PLEASURE TO REMEMBER,

THIS BOOK IS INSCRIBED BY HIS OLD FRIEND,

HENRY HOLL.

CONTENTS

OF

THE FIRST VOLUME.

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	NEWS FROM ABROAD	1
II.	HOME	20
III.	THE STRANGER AND HIS "DOG"	37
IV.	A COMPLICATION OF EVENTS	49
V.	"THE MILITARY TUTOR"	63
VI.	LOVE ON BOTH SIDES	74
VII.	"THE CASKET"	95
VIII.	ANGUS MACLEOD	112
IX.	AN UNEXPECTED CLAIM	127
X.	A FATHER AND HIS TWO SONS	141
XI.	THE GREEN LANES	161
XII.	BREAKING THE ICE	189
XIII.	MRS. RUSHBROOK'S LETTER	205
XIV.	GOING SOUTH	217
XV.	A NIGHT AT THE CASTLE	236
XVI.	A FRIENDLY MEETING	255
XVII.	A LITTLE OUT OF ORDER	269

THE GOLDEN BAIT.

CHAPTER I.

NEWS FROM ABROAD.

THE day had been unusually calm for that late season of the year when the equinoctial gales were at their height, and autumn was drawing to a close; but towards evening the wind blew fitfully and in gusts, the glass had fallen, and the general appearance of the sky indicated some remarkable change.

The sunset was a fiery haze; a heavy bank of cloud rose in the horizon, followed by a flash or two of lightning and a rumbling of thunder; the sky had a leaden look, and the night a threatening, stormy appearance.

The sun had scarcely set before a south-east wind sprang up—a wind of such unusual violence as to tear that bank of cloud into a thousand pieces, drive it and scatter it, and at a single burst cover the heavens with flying masses, until the stars could hardly be distinguished, so trem-

bling was their light, and so tumultuous the dense dark patches tossing and rolling between the earth and them.

The wind ceased as suddenly as it came. There was no motion, and no sound. But the moon came out, and the night promised after all to pass away in quiet.

The lull was only momentary. The wind rushed by again; another cloud rose up, spreading and spreading, until its accumulated vapour blocked out the view to windward, obscuring the moon, and blotting out the stars.

A drenching rain came down, but after a few minutes left off. Then it rained as heavily as before; the sound as of a mighty torrent filled the air; the thunder rattled, and the lightning flashed; the terrific wind swept by with almost unexampled fury, and a general commotion of the elements threatened serious consequences by sea and land.

There was one who heard that blast with fear and trembling; and, listening as she worked, tried to fix her attention to the task she had in hand, to shut the tumult out, and convince herself she fancied the wind was rougher than it really was, because she dreaded it, and had reason to apprehend danger from its violence. She knew her husband would be afloat at that par-

ticular time, and his ship exposed to all the fury of the storm—unless by some providential interposition it raged less wildly out at sea than on land, or, favoured by the trade winds, he had arrived in port before that dreadful gale sprung up, blowing directly in his teeth.

Listening till she was well nigh crazy, and working without quite knowing at what, she felt the impossibility of sitting any longer; but putting down her needlework, went to the house-door and looked into the street.

The night looked wild and dark, the gutters were full of water; the roadway was almost impassable; the wind swept in at the open door with a cold, icy chill, and forced her backwards as she stood to watch if she could see any signs of the tempest abating. But there were none; and glad to get into the house again, she closed the door, and coming back into the room tried to resume her sewing.

The rain dashed against the windows as she drew her chair up to the table and sat down to work; but, blinded by her tears when she thought of her husband and the terrors of that night, she made little progress, though she seemed to work incessantly, and as if she gave her whole attention to it.

There were two other sitters in that room,

one by the side of the fire-place, and the other opposite her mother. They were fair, and had delicate complexions, though the one next the fire had darker hair and a more staid and womanly appearance than her sister. They had the same cast of features, and bore the same resemblance to the mother the mother bore to them, though neither possessed that peculiarly striking countenance which distinguished her, which, while it could not be said to be positively austere, could on no account be pronounced cheerful or agreeable. There might be an affectionate disposition and a goodness of heart hidden under that look of gravity, but a stranger was by no means bound to expect it, nor to hope for it, when looking on that forced solemnity, that severity of aspect, and that fixity of features she seemed to have acquired by habit, and not from any freak of nature.

The outline was the same in each, but each different; the mother's face being more marked and formal, more starched and prim, and as though a scrupulous adherence to religious exercises had made her almost unconsciously assume a staidness of demeanour and a coldness of manner, by way of reminding her daughters that they ought to be less frivolous, but should follow her example, and become as indifferent, if

not as positively averse to the vanities of the world as herself.

Sitting half in shadow, half in light, in the chimney corner, and in the dim light thrown on her from the lamp looking at something she held in her hand, the eldest daughter did not seem to be aware of the drenching and the driving on the windows; of her mother's going out of the room, nor of her return to it, pale and dejected. She was so engrossed with the earnest, though stealthy inspection she fixed upon that carefully concealed something, she appeared to prefer the shade she sat in, and the opportunity it afforded for secret gazing (and for holding her hand in such a manner that the firelight should fall on it, whilst she kept her back towards the lamp); she neither noticed the clattering of the storm, nor the few words her sister addressed to her, nor paid the least attention to anything.

Her sister sat at the same table with her mother, busy with needle and thread, scissors, and a paper pattern, which latter seemed to try her patience and put her out, in her attempts to make it do exactly as she wished. But as at times she had to shift and alter it, to place it first one way, then another, she could not help observing her mother's melancholy look, and

that her eyes were full of tears, while her sister appeared to be too earnestly engaged in gazing at her lover's portrait to notice anything but that.

They were soon to be aroused from this domestic lull, as, startled by a gust of more than ordinary violence, and by a blast that shook the house, the mother called on her daughters to join her in prayer to the Almighty, that He might be pleased to save her husband, and protect him in the fearful rush of wind and wave to which he was exposed.

"It is only He can help us now," she cried. "His voice can still the winds and waters, rock the ship gently as an infant's cradle, and in the midst of peril save all who trust in Him—who love and worship Him, who put their faith in Him, and live in obedience to His will."

As if to mock their prayers, and tell them their supplications were in vain, a wilder gust than ever filled the air! A crash as of a roof blown off, or a house thrown down, rang through the streets, while the raging tempest swept along as if howling and moaning over the mischief it had caused.

"It is enough. God's will be done!" said the mother, rising to her feet.

"But, dear mother, storms are seldom felt on

sea and land at the same time. The wind was quite as bad a fortnight ago, and though the newspapers made a great talk about it, no particular harm came of it, as I can hear," said the elder daughter, thinking to comfort her.

"I remember the storm you mean well enough without being reminded of it, and all that was said about it, Margaret. But that is nothing to the purpose. We are not speaking of that storm, but of this, which to my mind is quite as bad, if not worse, for the wind is more gusty to-night, and, coming in a sudden sweep, is far more dangerous, as your father could tell you if he were here—which, please God, he soon will be, and never go to sea again."

"He was quite determined upon that the last time, mother, when he kissed us and bade us all good-bye. I remember as well as possible his saying—'One more voyage, and I shall have made enough to settle down and live at home; for I have had enough of it, and don't intend to go to sea again.'"

"Bless all poor houseless creatures in their need to-night, and give them warmth and shelter!" cried the mother, a little more calmly, but with an equally devout expression. "But the wind has fallen. It comes less wildly than it did, though

out at sea it is utterly impossible to say how it may rage, or what mischief it may occasion in a different part of the world."

"But father must be close at home by this time, and as he was to sail eight weeks ago, he is most probably in the Bristol Channel or safe in port at the very moment we are making ourselves so wretched about him, and crying our eyes out without quite knowing why."

"Or on the wide Atlantic, tossed and driven at the mercy of the elements! But your father is a good seaman. He is a wise and experienced master, and, as the owners know, no man is more competent to take command of a West India trader than Captain Rushbrook."

At this turn given to the conversation, Mrs. Rushbrook was easily persuaded to resume her sewing, and to speak in a more cheerful manner of her husband, and the hope she entertained of his return; and as her daughters were glad to talk of their father, and of the happiness they hoped to enjoy when he came home for good, their chatting took an almost lively turn.

"Wont it be delightful to have him always at home, dear mother? And wont you, after all, have reason to be thankful you married a sailor, if only for the pleasure of talking to him about his voyages, and of the time he was away, when

you were so wretched you did not know what to do?" said the younger daughter.

"I have been so little used to comfort, Bertha, it is time I had a prospect of being able to settle down and say I have a husband. Heaven knows I have had little comfort of a wedded life as yet. I have hitherto only known its cares and anxieties."

"But when dear father did come home, were you not doubly happy? and though he was away at times, I am sure his absence only made you long with your whole heart to have him with you once again. At least, I know I should have felt so," said Margaret, glancing at her lover's portrait.

"I should have been infinitely happier if he had never been away, or if I had thought differently in my youth, and reflected on the wretchedness I should have to endure as the wife of a man so constantly exposed to danger as your father. Now, soldiers and sailors are no doubt generous and brave, but they are not domesticated men; their very professions prevent their being so, for they can never calculate how long they may be at home, or when their duties may call them away at an hour's warning to go on foreign service, or to make a voyage."

"You did not always think so," said Margaret, half sorrowfully, yet half reproachfully.

"No, or I should have acted differently. I should certainly not have married your father had I known what I know now, or could I have foreseen the years of misery I should have to experience as the wife of a seafaring man."

"But you did *not* think of it, mother, and even if you *had* thought of it, I very much question if you would have acted differently. You would have married father in spite of all, if you really loved him, as of course you did; and I should have thought the very last thing you would have thought about was what you were speaking of just now."

"Whatever I may have thought, I trust I had sufficient prudence to conceal it, and not let others see it. There is no difficulty in knowing what your thoughts are, or that at this very moment you are thinking of that young Arkwright, whose addresses you have been foolish enough to encourage in spite of my well-known objection to his profession, which is quite as likely to entail on you as serious consequences as those I have endured as the wife of a sailor."

"But not if his wife accompanies him and is a participator in his cares. She at least would have no reason to complain of absence. She would be with him, mother, and, if living abroad,

could hardly be said to be so unfortunate as you have been in those dreadful separations of which you have so much reason to complain."

"A pretty tale for children and for people ignorant of the world. Can a soldier march with wife and children at his heels? Can he be present at their beck and call, or expected to cling to them, when he has his duty to discharge, or to engage in battles in which he may be shot down, as thousands have been before him, and leave his helpless wife and little ones to lament his loss?"

"And if so, mother," said her daughter, shuddering while she pretended to be firm, "would it not be better to know the worst at once, rather than live in ignorance of his fate, or only hear of it after you had indulged in hopes that he was living still, and trusted day by day to have him back with you again?"

"Better not marry, then, than run the risk. Better wait and see what fortune offers in some other lover who is not called upon to run the hazard of an untimely death, as this young man must run his hazard, and as your father has run his a dozen times in a year. I tell you, Margaret, I would not willingly see a child of mine torn from me by any marriage that could offer, if she is to live a thousand miles away, instead of being

close at hand, and where I could know of her welfare at a moment's notice."

"But other girls have married so."

"As I did, and repented—not of my choice, nor of your father as a man, for I always found him kind and good, affectionate and true. But kindness and affection are not the sum of all a woman hopes for in a husband. He must have the opportunity to show his kindness and his love; and when she marries she does not look for constant separation, or a meeting once in a year. She does not know, she cannot know, except by bitter experience, the miseries of such a life, nor what dreadful things the separations are that follow such meetings. No; husband and wife, to be truly happy, should be as much together as a man's business will allow. Should they be kept too constantly apart, or only meet at stated intervals, it follows as a natural consequence that the bond gets loosened which otherwise would have kept them close, and made the one indispensable to the other."

"But mother——"

"I have told you of my sufferings; therefore take warning by my experience of what must as surely come to you, if you marry this young man, as night follows day. I have told you of my misery, of my constantly increasing fear, and

how, with each commotion of the elements, I have trembled all the time your father has been away. I am not a weak woman; I am not a nervous woman; but I tell you that, much as I found fault with it and rebelled against it at the time, I would rather have endured my aunt's scolding all my life than listened for one hour to that midnight sighing, those solemn dirges, and those fearful moans, sounding for all the world like the shrieks of dying men, or of poor unhappy creatures struggling with the waves, I have too constantly listened to ever to live in hopes of forgetting."

Margaret saw by her mother's excited manner that the time was not a proper one to say anything in opposition to her views, or in favour of her own. She therefore held her peace.

Her sister was not so prudent. By calling her mother's attention to the different arrangements they should have to make on their father's return for good, she hoped to spare Margaret the repetition of a lecture which had grown painful by its frequency, and that the poor girl might be saved all further trouble for that night at least if she put in a word or two by way of changing the conversation.

But at the mention of her husband's name, Mrs. Rushbrook took the opportunity to call the conversation back to its original subject, and

silencing Bertha by a wave of the hand, she said—

"Your father's return home is no doubt our first consideration, and one we should think about in preference to all others—if God so wills he shall return at all!—when, as I have told your sister here a dozen times, we must abide by his arrangements to regulate our future movements. In his last letter he said he had embarked nearly the whole of his savings in his present freight, and by taking advantage of a dull market abroad hoped to realize a large profit on his outlay, and settle down in peace for the remainder of his days. It will be time enough when he comes back to enter upon the discussion as to whether this Mr. Frederick Arkwright (who appears to have nothing in the world to recommend him but a miserable ensigncy) is a husband he would choose for his daughter, and whether he thinks she has acted rightly in encouraging his addresses unknown to her mother, and in opposition to her wishes. Let him once come home——"

A loud and unexpected knocking at the street door, and the servant coming to say that a gentleman had left a letter and a packet, with particular directions that they should be delivered to Mrs. Rushbrook immediately, put a stop to further talk of Margaret's imprudent conduct,

and the terrible consequences foreshadowed by her mother should she be wilfully determined to adhere to her engagement.

Having glanced at the direction on the letter, and not recognising the handwriting, Mrs. Rushbrook began to wonder who it could be from, and what on earth the man could mean by writing to her, he being a perfect stranger, and having no possible business with her that she was aware of.

She was about putting the letter on one side, when happening to turn it over, she observed a very handsome seal impressed on the outside, and was instantly inclined to regard it more favourably for that circumstance. She therefore placed it carefully on the table, took up the packet, and uttering an exclamation of surprise, began to open it with nervous trepidation, telling her daughters that it was from their father, and wondering more and more what the letter and the packet could be about.

The time required to open the packet gave Margaret and her sister the opportunity to press up to their mother's side and anxiously await the sight of its contents. It was what they little expected, or their mother either, who could scarcely believe her eyes when she saw a parcel of banknotes, folded round a letter, fall into her lap.

The notes were fastened round the enclosure by a piece of twine, and when that was untied, the rather bold hand of the Captain was at once recognised by both mother and daughters on the outside of the letter.

What it could be about, or why her Robert should have sent her the money, she could not conceive. Opening the letter without a word, Mrs. Rushbrook ran her eyes over it, and scanning the contents, saw that it was dated "Kingston, Jamaica, August 1st, 1834," and the summary of its contents as follows :—

Captain Rushbrook was no coward, but like all sailors he was superstitious, and as he had to make his homeward voyage in a ship more deeply laden than he could wish, and not in such good condition as she ought to be, he had hastily enclosed what money he had about him in a packet, and entrusted it to a friend's care to bring over to his wife, so that in the event of any misfortune happening to him in his voyage, she would at least receive the remainder of his savings, and the whole of what he had to send after paying for the extra cargo with which the *Nancy* was freighted rather more heavily than usual.

She read thus far quietly enough. But as he still dwelt on his strange forebodings, and of apprehensions for the safety of his voyage, she

turned to her daughters with an uneasy look, and read aloud the remainder of the letter.

"If," he wrote, "all goes well with me, why this letter costs little trouble, and can do no harm. If, on the contrary, I should meet with ill luck, I shall at least have done a wise man's part in trusting what I have left to a friend to take to you. You will know him as an honourable, though strangely-tempered man: frank, yet suspicious; open, yet doubting; but where he takes a liking, an earnest and a constant friend. I have entrusted to him what I know will reach you safely, and also have confided to him certain directions I think may be of use to you should my last voyage prove my last indeed. One thing, however, I earnestly entreat of you—and I beg it may be considered as my dying wish—should my ship go down, and the one he sails in reach England, you will manage to contrive it so that Margaret and he may come together. He is rich, and above all he is successful; and I am quite certain of one thing, that Margaret could not do better than marry him, as he is worthy of her in all respects, and a highly honourable man."

Hoping and despairing at the same time; anxious for her father, and tremblingly alive to the uncertainty of her own future, Margaret

turned towards her mother to observe the impression made on her by the letter, when to her surprise she saw her sitting with the notes and paper crumpled in her hand, her eyes fixed on the ground, and in a half unconscious state, appearing scarcely to know why she held them in her hands at all, or if indeed she had just read the letter they had listened to with so much bewilderment.

Then all at once, and as if some painful thought had seized upon her, she quivered from head to foot, threw down the notes and paper, and turning to the letter still lying unopened on the table, snatched it up and began to tear it open, but paused in terror as soon as she had broken the seal.

That letter, that forgotten and insignificant letter, she had at first regarded so suspiciously, and felt half inclined to toss into the fire, had now become a thing of fearful consequence. It contained, as she now began to fear, some dreadful tidings, some unexplained and mysterious message respecting the husband and the father, and anxious to be informed, yet dreading the worst, she could scarcely summon courage to open it.

At last, and after a painful effort to control herself, she spread the letter open, glanced hur-

riedly down the page, then with a fearful shriek fell back fainting in her chair, holding the fatal letter in her hand, and nervously clinging to that by which she had been informed of her husband's loss, and that all on board his ship had perished with him.

CHAPTER II.

HOME.

The writer of the letter had not explained particulars; he had merely stated the melancholy fact of her husband's loss, and begged to be permitted to pay his respects to his friend's widow in the course of a few days, when, as he said, he would offer such consolation as lay in his power, and acquaint her with the Captain's latest wishes.

The bank-notes sent in the packet were easily counted, and would supply them with the means of living for a year or two at most. The rest was left to chance, and to their future industry to honestly gain a livelihood the best way they could—unless, indeed, Margaret could be persuaded to avail herself of the unexpected opportunity so strangely presented to her by the stranger's arrival, not only to insure her own fortune, but to benefit her family at the same time.

But would that fortune chance? Would he, the writer of that letter, so soon be captivated, or, presuming that he should be, would she

receive his addresses and accept his offer as a sensible girl should?

Busy with these reflections, and occupied by schemes she thought likely to promote her own and her daughter's welfare, Mrs. Rushbrook never reflected if the stranger's addresses might prove agreeable to Margaret. She had her own view respecting her, and resolved, provided her husband's friend wished to become connected with his family, not to be dissuaded from it by any girlish waywardness on her daughter's part. A match with a man so wealthy and so well disposed towards them was more than enough—as she conceived—to recompense Margaret for anything she might have to suffer in consequence of a change of lovers; and, as she had always set her face against her present admirer, the way was open to a second one, who, she felt confident, would be found in all respects a most interesting and agreeable person.

Could Margaret have been prevailed upon to think so too, all difficulty would have been avoided. Instead of which, the bare suggestion of what her mother more than once alluded to filled her with uneasiness. Her father, she thought, would have been more considerate had he been alive. He would not have sacrificed her against her inclinations; but now he was

dead, and the fate of Frederick and herself depended, not on him, but on her mother, and the machinations of this horrible stranger, she felt called upon to exercise a powerful constraint over her feelings, at the same time that she silently resolved to be constant to her old lover, in spite of anything the new one could persuade her to the contrary.

Strengthened by her love, determined to be true, and to arm herself against all fear of wavering, she placed the miniature next her heart and endeavoured to forget her cares in sleep; or failing sleep, then to reflect on the painful nature of her position; on her father's untimely death, and her threatened separation from her lover.

Should she be forced to give him up, abandon all her girlish hopes, and, actuated by a sense of duty, forego her own desire, simply to aid the plans of others? Should she, so willingly and romantically betrothed, be forced to give him up, and leave her to be won by some one else? — by that stranger, who, like some evil genius, had come, first to tell them of her father's death, and then perhaps to profess his love for her!

He might not after all be attracted by her, even though they wished he should be. There

was no reason why he should; she did not see the slightest probability of it, and would never have thought of it but for her father's letter, and his express wish that she should be that stranger's wife—that jealous, doubting stranger, who, from what her father had said of him, was the last person in the world she could like. And then, again, who was he, and what was he? Was he fair or dark? generous and brave, or simply purse-proud and vain? A factor, or the owner of an estate—one who, having made a fortune, was content to accept the compensation paid for the emancipation of his slaves, and, satisfied with his wealth, willing to settle down and marry an English wife.

It might be so, and presuming she were the one selected, what an opportunity she would have to ease her mother's necessities, make her sister happy by her sacrifice, enable her to suit her affections to her fancy, and marry, as she could never hope to marry, her first and only love.

Perplexed and ill at ease, anxious to promote the welfare of her family, yet miserable in herself, a week or more went by; her mother silent and dejected, her sister thinking only of her father, and calling to her mind repeated acts of his parental fondness. Nor was Margaret in-

different to his claims on her affection. She knew how dearly he had loved them, and how he had encountered hardships and a life of peril for their sakes. She knew all this, but though she grieved for him, and revered his memory, she could not avoid reflecting on her own unhappiness, nor help thinking of some one else perhaps, whose gentleness and kindness had won her to betroth herself to him, and trust her heart to him in preference to all others.

But as time flew by, and several days elapsed without receiving the promised visit, she began to fancy that the stranger had forgotten all about them, or was too much occupied to cast a thought upon that seaman's wife and daughters, to whom he had simply been the bearer of a message, but that discharged, troubled himself no further about them, nor cared whether they lived or died.

She almost hoped that this might prove the case, and that he would forget they even lived. Yet, spite of her indifference, she felt a latent curiosity to know what he was like, and if he were really so very rich as her father had reported him to be. It did not matter if he were as rich as Crœsus, as far as she was personally concerned. It was not his wealth which tempted her; but a feverish anxiety to know, if, seeing

her, he would be likely to be won, and, provided he became enamoured of her, then to ascertain how far he might presume on her cold reception to declare his passion for her.

But at the end of a fortnight Mrs. Rushbrook grew restless and impatient, and began to think that the stranger might at any rate have found time to call, if only to relieve her anxiety, and tell her what he knew respecting her husband and his terrible fate. She was anxious to know about Margaret too; if there were any chance of his taking a liking to her, and of her liking him. Situated as they were, it became imperative to know what she had to expect and what to do, now her husband was no more, and she had to depend chiefly on her own exertions for the future.

She had no heart to work—she had no patience to read; her eyes ached with weeping, and altogether Mrs. Rushbrook was in a most unhappy state of mind. The lamp was burning on the table; Margaret was sitting in her old corner by the fire, and Bertha opposite her mother, trying to work, but looking so sad and miserable, the poor girl could do little else but cry, or think of anything but her father.

The room was still as death! A moan or two, the click of the needle, and a suppressed sigh from Margaret, were all that broke the silence,

whilst the black dress of the mourners made the apartment doubly solemn; giving it a melancholy look, and telling the tale of recent loss as plainly as if the Captain's coffin had been in the room and his dead body lying in it.

An unexpected knocking at the street-door broke the silence, and rousing them from their despondency called the blood into their faces only to leave them pale and trembling when they remembered how once before they had heard that knock, and, on hearing it again, presumed that the stranger had called according to his promise to tell them all he knew about the Captain, and of his being lost at sea.

He was in the passage, and inquiring for her mother; and, judging of him by his voice, Margaret disliked him before she had seen him —then pressed the miniature closer in her hand, and, strengthened by the very touch, thought that, however brave and bold that man might be her father had selected to be her husband, she had sufficient courage to preserve her resolution and reject him, unless——

But before he entered the room—before the servant had time to show him in—the thought came stealing over her that that stranger had been the last to see her father in the world alive—the last to say good-bye to him, and the last to

shake his hand before he embarked upon that fatal voyage! Then looking at her mother and her sister, thought she saw the same sad thought possessing them, and felt that they were as nervously affected by the same emotions as herself.

He came into the room with an almost noiseless step, and advancing to meet her mother, took her hand in his, and led her to a seat when he saw with what difficulty she supported herself, and that she burst into a flood of passionate broken-hearted tears on seeing him.

His manner was so gentle, his look so full of sympathy, and his bearing so manly, Margaret almost forgot her prejudice out of respect to the consideration he showed to others; then resuming her seat she tried to read his character, and convince herself that after all his tenderness and consideration were nothing but what might have been expected from one who had known her father, and that her original impression was the right one, notwithstanding the little wavering she felt at the sight of his emotion, and the sympathy he showed to their distress.

Faltering as she bade him welcome to their disconsolate home, the widow begged him to excuse the state in which he found them, "though in a little time," she said, "she hoped they should recover themselves and be able to treat him with

the consideration he deserved; not only for bringing over the packet, but in calling to acquaint them with her poor husband's wishes."

But at the mention of her husband her tears broke out afresh, so that what with sobs and tears the poor woman could hardly say a word.

"You are no doubt aware," the stranger said, when she had recovered herself a little, "through the contents of the packet I had the honour to leave for you, that Captain Rushbrook commissioned me to inform you of certain matters interesting to you and your family, and of his last wishes—if by any chance his voyage turned out badly."

"Oh! yes; and of his strange forebodings, sadly realised!—sadly and grievously made true."

"It was a strange superstition. But sailors, as we know, indulge in omens; and a crooked sixpence or a child's caul are in their eyes matters of serious import. The Captain, as a rule, was less given to notions of this sort than most. He had a brave and enduring spirit, and it was with sincere regret I heard of his untimely end when all things promised so fairly for the future."

"It is very sad," replied the widow, struggling with her tears.

"Time comes we all must die," replied the

stranger; "but to go down so suddenly, so helplessly, and like a puny float dragged under by some mighty fish, has something awful in it; and then to watch the fearful lurch a vessel makes when swallowed in a trough of the sea—to watch her slowly sink and then go out of your aching eyes once and for ever, is enough to make the stoutest tremble, be he landsman, sailor, saint, or sinner."

"And did you see all this?"

"I did, but was powerless to assist. There were plenty of stout hearts and hands to lend their aid if the thing could have been done, but it was hopeless! We had enough to do to keep ourselves afloat, and as the tempest had by this time reached a higher pitch than ever, it became necessary for our own preservation to keep good sea-room and put the ship's head before the wind."

"And could none be saved? Did they all perish?"

"All. That is, unless I count the one I managed to rescue."

"You saved one—and not him?"

"I wish it had been, with all my heart. I would willingly have thrown the other back again to have held the Captain hard and fast. But it was not to be. Down with his ship he went, and may Heaven have mercy on his soul!"

"But this one you saved?"

"A strange, incomprehensible creature, whose fear of death had grown into a sort of madness; yet, strange to say, his madness taught him how to struggle for his life and make an attempt to save it, whilst other men sank down despairing to their end. You see the ship I sailed in was a quicker vessel than the *Nancy*, and though we left Kingston Harbour several days later, it was expected that we should arrive in England as soon, if not sooner than the Captain—that is, if all went well and no mishap befel us on the way."

"But this poor drowning man?"

"We came up with the *Nancy* within about a fortnight's sail of England. A south-west wind had blown our topsail into shivers and carried our foremast by the board. Still we kept our course, and, thanks to a trim-built ship, made good headway, and rode the tempest through. High mounted as a house at times, then ducked below, and sliding down a watery hill, we rose or fell, and by good luck continued still to rise or sink with safety."

"And so you came up with the *Nancy*?"

"We found her water-logged and mastless, the awful waves making a clean breach over her, and smothering her in foam."

"And this was all you saw?"

"All but the misty clouds above and the boiling sea below, whirling and tossing and churning round the ill-fated vessel as if to suck her down and drag her to the bottom. There appeared no chance of lowering a boat in such a terrific sea, but they did it somehow, and we could perceive a crowd of frightened wretches struggling to get in her. But scarcely was she afloat, and before they could get clear of the ship, a mighty wave drove her against the vessel, stove in her side, and left the unhappy creatures to their fate."

"Horrible! Horrible!"

"And then a pitchy darkness spread the face of sea and sky; a mist so intense and overwhelming, that while it lasted we could distinguish nothing, but had to strain our eyes to see a yard before us; and when that passed, when the sea-fog was lifted by the wind, and the tempest came with a fresh rush as if to sweep the ocean and lash it into greater fury—a deadly fear arose, that during the passing of that blinding mist the helpless vessel had foundered, and all on board had perished."

"You saw her still?"

"We looked, and turning anxiously about, found to our horror that she had disappeared!

hull, masts, and spars vanished from the sight, and a wide sweep of foam spread like a winding-sheet over the dead and gone, the drowned and castaway."

A few minutes elapsed before he could resume. During the last few words the distress of the widow and her daughters had painfully increased, and the stranger himself appeared to be considerably affected on recalling the scene he had witnessed.

"There was no time to be lost, and in case some struggling wretch might rise up to the surface, we beat and tacked about as far as we dare do; kept a sharp look-out, and trusted to a fortunate chance to rescue some of the sufferers, but found our search in vain. Hencoops, water-casks, spars and rigging, swept by in plenty, but far as we could see, no human form appeared, and no trace of the ship's crew, dead or alive.

"We were about giving up all hope, when, casting a last look round, I thought I saw a man clinging to a piece of timber, making frantic efforts to save himself, and screaming horribly. Hoping we might be able to rescue him, I called to him to hold fast, and throwing overboard a grating lashed to a line, saw it sweep close by him."

"He caught the line?"

"Caught it and clung to it, and though nearly dashed to pieces by the waves he kept his hold, and stuck to it for life or death. But the struggle could not last much longer, and as by this time we had hauled him, and the piece of wreck to which he was lashed, up to the ship's side, it seemed more than probable that unless we got him up at once he would become exhausted and be swept away. There lay the poor wretch under our lee, helpless, but still clinging, though, as we saw, growing weaker every moment. As no one seemed inclined to risk his life to save him, I offered to go myself, and fastening a rope about my waist, was lowered at the very instant he was about to lose his grasp, and caught a good hold of him."

"How brave!" "How good!" they exclaimed, in a chorus of voices.

"I was just in time, and though knocked about a good deal by the waves, I managed to hold fast, and was drawn up with my almost lifeless load to the deck."

"And this poor man?" said Margaret, involuntarily attracted by the stranger's voice and manner.

"Was saved; but had to be put under the doctor's hands, for he was badly cut and bruised, and well nigh drowned. I was not in too good

plight myself, but soon came round after a little rest, and thought no more of the matter. But oh! to see that wretch's love of life and dread of the death he had lately escaped! It was something terrible; and when he heard who had saved him, and was able to get about, he fell upon his knees before me, frantically begged for blessings on my head, and vowed never to leave me night or day, if I would only let him serve me, and suffer him to devote his life to me."

"He was grateful at all events," said the widow.

"Yes, but very troublesome. He had, it appeared, gone to Jamaica some years before in hopes to better himself, but tiring of the place prevailed upon the Captain to bring him back to England at a cheap rate, and but for the accident I have narrated would have gone down in the ill-fated vessel with the rest."

"And he to be the only one saved from a watery grave!"

"Brave enough on ordinary occasions as I should take this man to be, he had, by his own confession, a terrible fear of death; so that when the storm was at its height, and the crew got drunk, or fell to praying, this ill-conditioned fellow went raving up and down, begging and entreating some one to save him at all hazards;

but as the men were bent on their own preservation and did not care too much about him, he was thrust back when he attempted to force his way into the boat, and so escaped the death they met. The rest you know. But not the full extent of this fellow's almost insane gratitude for the risk I incurred in saving him. He hangs about me like my shadow, will not be driven off, but steadfastly maintains his right to serve me and watch over me in return for what I did. So that at last I have consented to let him have his way, and have no doubt secured a faithful serving-man in Angus Macleod, who, from his former occupation, may be of value to me in cultivating the land I mean to employ him upon the moment I am in rightful possession of my estate."

A low dull pacing up and down the outside of the house had for some time excited the attention of the widow and her daughters, and though they did not mention it for fear of interrupting the stranger, they could not help turning and listening to it now a pause had come in the conversation.

Perceiving their eyes turned in the direction of the window, and that they were listening to the dull thud of footsteps passing up and down, the stranger said—

"There is nothing to be alarmed at. I ought perhaps to apologize for not telling him to keep further off; but it is only my "dog" as I sometimes call him—that same Angus Macleod I was mentioning just now—walking up and down and waiting till I go out."

"Poor faithful creature! Pray oblige me by letting him be asked into the kitchen, where he can have some supper and warm himself on this bitterly cold night."

"If you wish it, certainly. But he is used to waiting, and does not much care whether it's hot or cold."

Mrs. Rushbrook rang the bell, and on the servant's answering it she was told to ask Angus in, to give him his supper, and make a good fire for him to sit by till his master was ready to leave.

The servant did as she was ordered. After a slight parley at the door Angus walked in, and rubbing his feet heavily upon the mat, was heard to go lumbering downstairs into the kitchen.

CHAPTER III.

THE STRANGER AND HIS "DOG."

THE conversation had hitherto been limited to the briefest questions and to the replies of the stranger, as, breathless with attention, the mother and her daughters listened to his feeling, though rather unnecessary, description of the calamity by which the Captain had lost his life.

In person he was strongly built, his complexion dark, his face expressive; and though his features presented no especial points for admiration, there was a peculiarity about them that could not fail to attract attention, as under the influence of excitement they became almost handsome, and then again changed into something strangely forbidding when the excitement passed away, or when he alluded to the patient wretch outside whom he had likened to his "dog," and whose sense of gratitude he appeared almost to hold up to derision.

His brow was broad and lofty, but there was no great indication of intellect developed in his massy front, and what small signs there were, were more than counterbalanced by the expression of

his mouth. Thin lipped, and rather wide than narrow, it evidenced, as Margaret thought, a cruel disposition; whilst his jaw, square and singularly bold, betokened, in her eyes, a man of indomitable purpose—one who could, if he would, be obstinate as he was firm, or obstinate even without the necessary firmness. An obstinacy some men are known so thoroughly to possess as to pass for men of purpose and character, when their chief merit lies in a fixed determination to do just as they think proper.

Margaret saw all this, and experienced a doubt more puzzling still—a doubt as to the expression of his eyes. Large and slightly prominent and of a light grey colour, they had at times a soft and tender gaze, but which, while melting with a soft regret, had yet the power to contract, as, lit by sudden passion, his dark and heavy brow fell lowering down almost hiding them beneath.

All this she thought she could discover in that stranger's face. A certain charm of winning grace mixed with it as well, inducing her at times to think she had read his character correctly, and then again leaving her undecided and in doubt.

If that man was fated to be her husband, she had little knowledge of her own desire. He was so different, so utterly distinct from him whose

picture was lying next her heart, she had no possible conception by which to shape her thoughts, nor to explain how different this one was to him to whom she was betrothed.

The mother was more easily satisfied. Thinking of her husband, and of her daughters' helpless state, she readily accepted the stranger for what he appeared to be—a tall and by no means bad-looking man—a man her husband had known and valued, and, taking it for granted that the Captain had some especial reasons for liking him, she looked upon it as a matter of obedience and duty to his memory to receive him cordially, and welcome him as some especial good vouchsafed them in their distress.

Busy over her work, the youngest daughter did not speak, nor appear to form any opinion of her own, either for or against him. Intent upon the recollection of her father, she still worked on, or, blinded by her tears, turned her face away to wipe them from her eyes.

The stranger's story ended, it became a necessary courtesy to show him some trifling hospitality; and, anxious to be informed of her husband's latest wishes (which in his letter he had hinted at), Mrs. Rushbrook became more genial in her manner, threw off a certain portion of her moodiness, and endeavoured to arrive by slow,

but sufficiently definite stages at what was uppermost in her mind.

As a preliminary to this, and with a view to place Margaret prominently before him, she made some womanly excuse to call her to her, hoping to set her more conspicuously in the light, and afford him a better opportunity to observe her singularly handsome face and figure.

This artifice was not without its due effect. She had before appeared sufficiently attractive, and in her unaffected pose had induced him to turn his eyes to her, and address his words to her, as a principal, though silent, auditor in the room; but when she rose and tenderly approached her mother, a more than ordinary charm seemed to impel him to bend his full wide eyes on her with an almost startled sense of admiration.

That she was tall and fair, and exquisitely moulded in the perfection of a woman's form, was evident at a glance. Blue-eyed, brown-haired, fresh-coloured, yet most daintily complexioned, few beholders would have cared to turn their gaze away on once beholding her.

It is not to be supposed that Margaret was indifferent to her own perfections, nor to the sudden change apparent in the stranger's face, as slowly moving across the room she approached her mother. She rather seemed to have expected

this; had purposely kept herself aloof, and never intruded on the conversation, except by one brief question, as if a silent fear of awakening admiration had compelled her to remain secluded in hope to escape observation.

"You were kind enough to write," the widow said, as soon as her daughter had resumed her place, and she perceived a convenient pause had come, "you would tell us how my husband"—here she paused for a moment—"had commissioned you to deliver to us his instructions for the future, in the event of his fatal apprehensions being realised. It is not to be expected we can be otherwise than obedient to his wish, and thankful to you, sir, for your disinterested kindness."

"You have little to thank me for; and I am only sorry to be the messenger of such evil tidings. Had the Captain lived he could have told you how he and I traded together and sought to effect a mutual good. It was perhaps this knowledge of our ability to render each other a service first won his regard, and prompted him at the last to speak as freely as he did on matters touching his home in England, and of his wife and daughters, anxiously expecting his return."

"It is very, very dreadful! But taught in early life the lesson of humility, and to believe

that the chastening of our vanities is intended for our especial good, I trust I shall be able to evince sufficient gratitude, and accept with resignation the correction which God in His mercy has vouchsafed to us."

"It is God's will no doubt, and, like good Christians, we must submit to His decree. But when the loss of worldly means is superadded to the death of one we love, the burden is twofold weighted, and the accumulation of our woes more difficult to bear. Wives left in affluence may mourn, as good wives should, the loss of a husband; but Heaven help the widow suddenly deprived of husband and of means as well! Her case is far more pitiable, and demands consideration and respect."

"You show it by your words, and prove your sympathy by acting as you have done. It is a consolation to know my husband had at least so kind and true a friend as he found in you."

"It was, as I have hinted, a friendship chiefly springing out of a desire to do each other service. Yet not quite limited to that, since the Captain often flattered me by saying he wished I was in England and nearer associated with him than I then was."

He said this modestly enough, yet with a glance at Margaret as if he wished to read her

thoughts, and ascertain if he might pursue the subject further. But her eyes were cast upon the table, and gave no sign in answer to his wish. A slight heaving of the bosom, an imperceptible gathering of the brows, and that was all, except perhaps a nervous working with the hands, and the faintest change of colour visible in her cheeks.

It was not so with the mother. She changed like the chameleon, and from white to red flushed a visible approval, as she glanced first at her daughter, next at the stranger, then smiling graciously and slightly bowing, seemed to say that what her husband had suggested for their good it was her pleasure and duty to obey.

"There were certain matters," the stranger resumed, "so the Captain said, weighing heavily on his mind; the chief of which, his apprehensions of a dangerous, if not fatal voyage, and the fear of losing the savings of his life, should he go down and leave his wife and daughters well nigh penniless. He stated this in his warmth of friendship, not, as you may suppose, to make his private matters a theme of conversation, but to convince me he was sensible of the claims of his family, and earnest in his desire to promote their welfare."

"It was only like him," replied the widow, bursting into tears.

"Now this very over anxiety for the good of his family, I verily believe, first put the thought of danger in his mind, knowing as he did that their future welfare depended upon the safety of his cargo, and the money he hoped to realize on his share of it; and as the Captain and I were old friends, in consequence of my having had to manage a large estate for my father in Jamaica, and of my engaging him to ship its produce home, it followed—not unnaturally—that as we were about leaving for good, though in different vessels, he should confide to me everything he valued, and a few of his last wishes in case of anything happening to him."

"Nothing could have been more natural," exclaimed Mrs. Rushbrook.

"It is neccssary I should say thus much now my father is no more, and by way of explaining, that my principal object in returning to England is to establish my right to what he died possessed of. This, added to the money I shall receive under the new Act of Parliament to compensate proprietors for the emancipation of their slaves, will at least assure you I do not come to settle down a pauper, but am able and willing to afford you such assistance as lies in my power—provided the Captain's impression in my favour is reciprocated by his family."

"I am sure we ought to accept your kindness and consideration with gratitude," replied the widow, glancing towards Margaret, who, with her hands clasped before her, sat deep in thought.

"I do not mean it in the sense you name. I would be disinterested if you would permit me, and out of regard to your husband do all I can to lessen the severity of his loss. There might, indeed, be a different construction put upon my words, but that must come with time, or be explained at such subsequent visits, if you will permit them, as I may have the happiness to make."

"We shall not only receive them as a favour, but as an honour; and I am sure my daughters will rejoice to know that their father's friend has proved himself so considerate and kind to his disconsolate family."

"You are very good, and if you will allow me, I will beg of your daughters to accept of a few trifles I have brought from abroad, which, though of no great value, may be considered novelties in England."

Without conveying a notion of ostentation when he spoke of his wealth, he yet dwelt upon it as though he had a purpose in his words, and to show that, though he had discovered no signs of being acceptable to the daughter, he possessed

the means to place her in an enviable position, should she, upon better acquaintance, evince a liking for him.

One thing was certain, he was sensibly impressed by her, and though he spoke as a matter of courtesy to the mother, his words were evidently meant for Margaret, to whom he turned as if for encouragement, and by way of convincing her of his admiration.

She was sensible of this admiration, yet at the same time afraid of it. She knew exactly what he meant, and that he wished her to believe she had made an impression on him which only required a little yielding on her part to ripen into a stronger passion. He was certainly very kind and liberal, and though she wished he had not offered to send them presents, yet, as her mother seemed to wish they should accept them she felt bound to say something, or do something, that should convince him she was not insensible to his liberality and kindness.

But as she turned, and was about to express her thanks, she met his eyes fixed upon her with such an admiring, almost passionate glance, she had to sink her own in confusion, and keep a painful silence.

But her mother thanked him in her name and her sister's; then, after dwelling for a few mo-

ments on his kindness, and their house being a melancholy one now to ask him to, she said, if he would sometimes come and put up with their old-fashioned ways, they "should be only too glad to see him."

"It is time I took my leave," he said; "you must all be worn out with care and anxiety, and I am afraid my visit has not added to your cheerfulness. Of one thing, however, be assured, that much as I was devoted and attached to the Captain, I feel bound to confess that the impression left upon my mind by his friendship is strengthened when I contemplate the amiability and the beauty (here he turned to Margaret) of his family."

"You are very good," replied Mrs. Rushbrook.

"Before I go, there is one thing I ought to mention to relieve your anxiety respecting what the Captain entrusted me to communicate to you; but as it referred chiefly to pecuniary matters I hope you will permit me to hold it in reserve, and in the meantime be assured that any assistance I can render shall be given with pleasure. Should I send in my card in the course of a few days, and say that Mr. Ellerton—Mr. Mark Ellerton, has called, I hope you will remember me, and receive me as a friend."

He shook hands cordially with the mother and the younger daughter; but on bidding good-bye to Margaret he appeared to hold her hand longer than necessary; to hold it with a certain warmth of pressure—just sufficient to let her see he would like to hold it in his own for ever—then let it go, and said "good-night," in accents tender but subdued.

Summoning his man, Mark Ellerton took his leave; and as their footsteps died away Margaret sat listening to them until she fell into a state of painful musing, from which her mother had some difficulty in rousing her.

CHAPTER IV.

A COMPLICATION OF EVENTS.

MRS. RUSHBROOK'S early life had been influenced by circumstances of a contrary nature, and by events so entirely removed from ordinary calculation as to place her, as a wife, in a different sphere of life from that which had been originally designed for her, and surrounded her by influences very different from what either herself or family had suggested as likely to take place.

As the daughter of Josiah Hindmarsh, a Dissenting minister living in the North of England, her girlhood had been one of self-denial and enforced submission to the stringent rules by which her father governed his household and the small circle of obedient followers over whom he exercised unlimited control. A preacher against the horrors of the Slave Trade, he little dreamt how soon his daughter would espouse a man whose dealings, if not exactly in league with that unholy traffic, partook in some degree of the evils, as he thought, attendant on it—dealings in his mind almost as iniquitous as the trade in human life itself, and the produce of slave labour, a matter

with him, equally to be objected to, either in the way of profit or consumption, as the subjugation of the slave himself.

It was under such correction Mrs. Rushbrook passed her early days, having besides to endure the lessons constantly instilled into her ears by her paternal aunt, whose instruction ought to have convinced her, if it did not, that she was a vile and miserable wretch, and peculiarly fitted for Satan to ensnare—unless she listened to her advice and so became a proper-minded young woman, humble and meek and bent on heavenly bliss.

Whether this teaching were a little too severe, or that her aunt was given to preach but failed to practise the virtues she boasted, cannot be ascertained, though it was notorious that storms and bickerings frequently occurred to interrupt the household calm in which the family had up till then indulged. But when her father died, and Josiah Hindmarsh was laid in the dust, the storm arose to tenfold clamour, as aunt and niece battled it to their hearts' content, while each in turn boasted her own propriety, or exclaimed against the want of it in the other.

By way of change, or at the suggestion of her aunt, it had been arranged that her niece should go for a month or two on a visit to some friends at Bristol, where, under able guidance and taught

by their example, she hoped she might in time become a dutiful and obedient follower in the footprints legibly depicted and firmly pressed convenient for her tread—made, it is almost unnecessary to say, by herself, and leading upward in the ways of righteousness and virtue peculiar to a spinster.

But as Bristol was the chief port for the West India trade, it so fell out that at the house at which her niece was visiting, a variety of the *genus nauticum* were constant visitors; and meeting there the light-hearted and rather boisterous mate of a trader newly come to port, her feelings underwent a change. A sudden and unexpected tremor sprung up in her heart, and spite of sermons and the correction to which she had been subjected, she fell into a liking for a man who by his very nature seemed opposed to everything she had hitherto accepted as a matter of course, but who, she felt, had human instincts, and a gentleness of disposition prompting him to deeds of unaffected goodness worthy to be compared with those of her aunt herelf.

The mother heard of her daughter's departure from the fold with a sigh, but in answering her letters, prudently forbore all opposition to her wish—prompted thereto by the knowledge of household wants perhaps, and partly in oppo-

sition to the late Reverend Josiah Hindmarsh's maiden sister—so wholly set on thoughts of bliss, and so inimical to all suggestions of mundane happiness, she made a point of upsetting it wherever she had a chance.

She knew how meekly they had submitted to her husband's will, and how irksome at times that obedience had been to pay. She likewise knew the spirit of antagonism existing between her daughter and her husband's sister, and therefore felt that any man of respectability who should step in and marry her ill-provisioned daughter ought to be accepted, and not flown at, as the virtuous Priscilla Hindmarsh wanted to fly at him, and tear his eyes out for only looking at her niece, who, to confess a truth, was quite as willing to look at him as he was to look at her.

That Robert Rushbrook had desert and merit her Bristol friends one and all protested; declared he was a pattern of a seaman, and the most God-fearing man that ever put his foot on board a trader, or shipped over rum and sugar for the benefit of the commercial interests of the city. He was not a saint, of course; but then what seaman ever was—except when going down to Davy Jones's locker, and when all hopes were lost? But short of that, and simply reckoned

as an upright, honest man, there might be found as good, but none more deserving than that first of all first mates, who on board the *Nancy* was looked upon as her future captain, and who, when promoted, would no doubt command her faithfully and well.

Thus matters quieted by degrees. The aunt's acerbity was softened, but not extinguished; while the mother, willing to become a peace-maker and make things agreeable, set out for Bristol to judge of matters for herself. Favourably impressed by the frank, outspoken manner of the man, by the respect he showed to herself, and the tenderness he exhibited towards her daughter, she was easily persuaded to consent to the marriage and to sanction it by her presence; greatly to the horror of her sister-in-law, when she heard of it, but to the delight of her daughter, who was so enraptured at her mother's kindness she could hardly find words to express her happiness.

The compact duly signed, and sealed—as lovers' compacts generally are—by a kiss, Susan Hindmarsh became for better or worse the wife of Robert Rushbrook. His promotion followed soon after his marriage—rather too soon, as his wife thought, though her friends congratulated her on his success, and declared she ought to be a

happy woman, at the very time she felt herself a most miserable one at the thought of losing him.

Once afloat in his new capacity, the Captain won favours innumerable by his steady and exemplary conduct. His owners were satisfied, his crew were satisfied, and in short, Robert Rushbrook, as the master of the *Nancy*, realized all that had been said of him, and a great deal more. He was persevering, bold, yet prudent; stuck to his ship like its mainmast, and had never been known to lose an anchor or break a spar. Honest as the light, a shrewd bargainer, and a careful dealer, he had abundant opportunities afforded him by the owners to trade on his own account, so that by the time his eldest girl was four years old and his youngest was born, Captain Rushbrook had become a thriving man, and more than ever devoted to his rather methodistical, but painstaking and most prudent wife.

Passing from the time of her young motherhood up till now—now when her daughters were grown women, and when he whom she had so fondly loved was no more—Mrs. Rushbrook could not help recalling her own fond youth, and her own waywardness in bestowing her affections on a man so diametrically opposed to the wishes of her family, and so antagonistic to all their notions

of propriety, the wonder was how the match had ever been brought about, and by what means their adverse notions had been combated.

Her mother, it is true, had viewed her weakness tenderly, and consented to her marriage from prudent, if not selfish motives. But then she had not been grafted on a saint as had her husband's sister, who, as the very shadow of her brother, moved and thought as he did, and never even for a moment forgot the sanctity of his professions, nor accepted them for less than their apparent worth.

Rigid, starched, and formal, Priscilla never stooped to human weakness, but in her sectarian formality ignored all softness, and forgot all sensibility where the faults of less righteous beings than herself were concerned. Her niece, it is true, had not done so badly after all (although, as a matter of punishment for her disobedience, she half expected, and almost hoped, she would have suffered ill-usage and starvation). But time had softened her, and when the mother died, Priscilla so far consented to be pacified that she actually sent her niece a Christmas goose and a couple of barn-door fowls by way of peace-offering, and to show that, though perhaps her niece required neither, yet out of Christian charity she was willing to forgive, and afford

her unmistakeable proofs of her regard by the gifts so lavishly bestowed.

An advance having been made, and Priscilla taking the first step towards a peaceful settlement of their differences, it was arranged that Margaret, as her niece's eldest daughter, should pay a visit to her great-aunt at Knaresborough, in hopes her presence might heal up family quarrels and bring about a reconciliation between Mrs. Rushbrook and her relative.

That relative had now grown grey, and hard, and angular. Attenuated into lank proportions, she no longer exhibited her former roundness of form, but dwindled, as it were, into a human sign-post through her over-sanctity and too much shuddering at the sinfulness of the world, faithfully pointed out the way to guide all stragglers to the fold set up for their reception by her departed brother.

Here she took her stand; here dwelt on her own perfections, but said nothing of the scandal of her tongue, nor of the mischief she caused to all who differed with her in matters of faith or practice. She was as apt to malign as ever—to be as spiteful and malicious as ever. But then she had a little property! Though *she* had wasted and grown thin, *that*, it was hoped, had not; but, swelled by careful nursing, had increased in value and multiplied in stock.

It was this little property her aunt was known so carefully to preserve first led Mrs. Rushbrook to accept the goose and fowls. She was her nearest relation; she had a right to think of her family; and think of it she did when she consented that Margaret should visit her great-aunt, and afterwards bring home, she hoped, a satisfactory report of her intention to settle her freehold houses and funded property on herself and daughters.

But behold the perversity of events, and how the most unlooked for circumstances may be brought about by the wilfulness of children when trusted from their homes, and the watchful eye a mother always keeps upon her grown-up daughters! Left to their own direction they stumble, as a rule, upon those very rocks, or are drawn towards those young-men quicksands purposely designed to confound all prudent speculations, and bring to naught all wise suggestions for their good—their safe deliverance in a world of care.

Down that very pitfall into which her mother had formerly taken a leap in the dark, behold her daughter fallen, and desperately in love with a young and venturesome swain. One who, like the lover originally chosen by herself, was intended for a hazardous profession, and shortly

expected to join his regiment in India. That same Frederick Arkwright, whose picture Margaret had pressed so fondly in her hand on the night they sat listening to the storm—that picture she had so constantly looked at when he, the stranger, first came to darken with his shadow her young-born hopes, and blight her expectations of a happy future by his presence.

Frederick Arkwright was of a good Yorkshire family, rich in blood, but poor of means, or with just sufficient means to enable them to give their sons the education of gentlemen. The elder son (as elder sons not unfrequently are) was educated for the Church, and with good patronage might in time expect to succeed to a good living. The younger son (as is also frequently the case) was intended for the army, and under the able instruction of a military tutor diligently pursued his studies. He was smart and handsome, possessed the better intellect of the two, and seemed likely to be the winner in the game of life, provided he had equal chances with his brother and was not unfairly dealt by at the starting.

The mother and father were as tenderly attached to one son as the other, and would willingly have kept them both at home; but unfortunately their means were not sufficient to leave them in the position of gentlemen, unless

they first placed them in some profession or honourable pursuit. Mrs. Arkwright's uncle was an East India House Director; Mr. Arkwright was no less fortunate in having a Rector for his uncle, and it was not unreasonable to suppose that the two old bachelors would use their interest in their nephews' favour—the one in the Army, the other in the Church—the moment they were requested to do so.

The Rector promised, but the Director did better, he performed—presented Frederick with an ensigncy in the Honourable Company's service, and said "he would look after him if he only showed pluck, and proved himself a fire-eater after his example." Now an ensigncy was something. It was a good beginning, and who knew what Colonel Dick might ultimately do for him, if he only humoured him a little, set down to his work with a will, and commenced studying for his profession without loss of time!

The Rector's aid was yet to come (as come no doubt it would), and secure their eldest born some comfortable living. Then, as a matter of course, and after the Rector was dead, the Bishop of the Diocese (or whoever had the living in his gift) could not do less, they thought, than confer it on their son, and place him in that snug rectory out on the Border, but close enough to

home for them to get to see him at stated seasons. *He* would not be called away to fight in dreadful battles, as their youngest son must fight in imitation of the Colonel; but peaceful, rich, and sluggish, keep up the family name, and do by his brother, as they felt that Frederick would do by him—the moment he was appointed Governor-General of India, and had place and pension at his command.

In flattering prospects such as these the father and mother indulged, while the younger son steadily pursued his studies, and applied himself manfully to work. The elder worked a little, slept a great deal, and, as a necessary preparation for what he had to do, never left off talking of it; and in anticipation of his coming honours amused himself by counting his chickens instead of bestowing on more substantial study a proper and sufficient care.

Frederick's tutor pronounced him a perfect genius; spoke of him as a young man singularly gifted, quick, and sharp, and as wishing to benefit by a course of instruction he, the tutor, pronounced superior to all others, and the result of a system peculiarly his own; depending chiefly on the way he brought his knowledge to a focus, and by taking in all wandering thoughts, all wayside glances, managed to absorb all mental

vision as it were, all independent speculation, and hold his pupil hard and fast upon the point he had in view.

That the tutor had some merit must be readily admitted, and though, perhaps, not so extraordinary a hero as he wished to be considered, he was a man of parts, and had had considerable experience. He was slim and straight, turned with military precision to the right hand or the left, swelled out his little narrow chest, and walked as though he had been marching on parade. An old, and most ill-requited soldier, he had won his honours by his blood—could boast of wounds gained in the Peninsula, and of the loss of three fingers by a sabre-cut at Waterloo; yet was but a half-pay lieutenant after all.

Invalided, and a martyr to rheumatism caught by camping in the worst of weathers, and from being compelled, as he too often had been, to sleep in the open air—compelled, as soldiers are, to shake and shiver, sleep a feverish sleep, and perform the duty of a clothes-horse, and air their wet clothes upon their backs, rendering them liable to attacks of after-suffering, such as the Lieutenant now suffered, yet patiently endured as his share of the spoils.

Although considerably below the middle

home for them to get to see him at stated seasons. *He* would not be called away to fight in dreadful battles, as their youngest son must fight in imitation of the Colonel; but peaceful, rich, and sluggish, keep up the family name, and do by his brother, as they felt that Frederick would do by him—the moment he was appointed Governor-General of India, and had place and pension at his command.

In flattering prospects such as these the father and mother indulged, while the younger son steadily pursued his studies, and applied himself manfully to work. The elder worked a little, slept a great deal, and, as a necessary preparation for what he had to do, never left off talking of it; and in anticipation of his coming honours amused himself by counting his chickens instead of bestowing on more substantial study a proper and sufficient care.

Frederick's tutor pronounced him a perfect genius; spoke of him as a young man singularly gifted, quick, and sharp, and as wishing to benefit by a course of instruction he, the tutor, pronounced superior to all others, and the result of a system peculiarly his own; depending chiefly on the way he brought his knowledge to a focus, and by taking in all wandering thoughts, all wayside glances, managed to absorb all mental

vision as it were, all independent speculation, and hold his pupil hard and fast upon the point he had in view.

That the tutor had some merit must be readily admitted, and though, perhaps, not so extraordinary a hero as he wished to be considered, he was a man of parts, and had had considerable experience. He was slim and straight, turned with military precision to the right hand or the left, swelled out his little narrow chest, and walked as though he had been marching on parade. An old, and most ill-requited soldier, he had won his honours by his blood—could boast of wounds gained in the Peninsula, and of the loss of three fingers by a sabre-cut at Waterloo; yet was but a half-pay lieutenant after all.

Invalided, and a martyr to rheumatism caught by camping in the worst of weathers, and from being compelled, as he too often had been, to sleep in the open air—compelled, as soldiers are, to shake and shiver, sleep a feverish sleep, and perform the duty of a clothes-horse, and air their wet clothes upon their backs, rendering them liable to attacks of after-suffering, such as the Lieutenant now suffered, yet patiently endured as his share of the spoils.

Although considerably below the middle

height, he made up his want of size by his consequential bearing; and when his coat was buttoned to his chin, when his cane was in his hand, and he had satisfied himself by glancing in a small square of looking-glass nailed over his washing-stand, that his stiff grey whiskers were in order, and brushed over his cheek-bones like a pair of wings ready to fly away with his head, his appearance became almost formidable.

CHAPTER V.

"THE MILITARY TUTOR."

LIEUTENANT CONROY NUBBLETON was sixty if an hour—and on his half-pay made as good an appearance as could reasonably be expected. His vanity left alone, and his small faults of consequence forgiven, he was a gentleman you might be proud to know, albeit he was compelled to add to his small income by giving instruction in the military art, for which, it is only justice to say, he was in every way qualified. Hence it was, that happening to reside in the neighbourhood, and his fame having reached the ears of Mr. Arkwright, that gentleman entered into an engagement with him and appointed him to be his son's instructor.

Now it so fell out that in performing this necessary duty the Captain had to pass the front garden of Miss Priscilla Hindmarsh's cottage going to his pupil, and again on his return. Twice on every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, wet or dry, hail or shine, did the Captain strut along, dressed in his everlasting military surtout, braided and frogged, ornamented by cane an

whisker, and mounted on his preposterously high heels.

Whatever may be the working of our human destiny, whether high-heeled boots, or canes, or whiskers, are presumed to exercise an influence on our careers, punctual to the day and to the minute, Miss Priscilla Hindmarsh was always to be observed at the window the moment the Captain's heels were heard, or his cane was seen to flourish, first to carte and then to tierce, as he came jauntily along.

The flowers in the window wanted watering, or her canary a little seed, perhaps; and ever at these pleasing tasks, or seated at the open window reading a formidable book of sermons, Priscilla might be seen the instant the clock had chimed a quarter past the hour, when punctually at twenty minutes past, the pavement recognised the presence of the Captain, and signalled his approach to her attentive ear; then stepping into the garden, she would pick a piece of groundsel, or with uplifted eyes look as if expecting rain, when not a cloud was to be seen, and nothing worth looking at but the grey-whiskered Captain going or returning from his pupil.

From purely accidental meetings such as these —he seeing Priscilla *at* the window, or Priscilla

seeing the Captain *from* the window, a sort of smile followed these most singular of chances; and, though at first Miss Hindmarsh prudently repelled his familiarity by one of her severest frowns, the repetition of the meeting and the strangeness of the event appeared so odd, that Miss Hindmarsh positively smiled one day, and afforded the Captain the opportunity to bow the next but one, when sure as fate Priscilla was chirping to her bird, or looking out for rain—compelling her to move, the slightest of all moves, in return to his salute.

Why should her great-aunt be always at the window at that particular time, or why so anxious to know the exact moment of the day—before going into the garden to pick a slip of groundsel; or if not out of doors, then equally busy indoors watering the flowers at the window—as though they required watering at one particular minute, and could not be trusted to any one but herself?

Was it that she was really given to flowers out of a sudden love to them, or was her bird moulting and requiring a change of food?

It must be one or the other—so Margaret thought, when, after residing for a month under her great-aunt's by no means cheerful roof, she observed this sudden change come on her daily

round of life—a change so sudden and so novel she was unable to assign a reason for it, and could not be so easily persuaded that the canary required unusual feeding, or the groundsel such frequent picking, as her great-aunt said they did, by way of explanation.

Could it be that, worn and wearied over that big book of family sermons, her aunt had become a little drowsy, and therefore stirred about to wake herself up, and put an edge upon her piety? It could not be the blue-coated, sparrow-faced Captain who attracted her; his clinking heels keeping such a clatter in the street, that Margaret wondered how on earth the man could walk on them, and why he always came by so exactly at a given time.

It could not be! And yet it had more than once occurred to her that, whilst pretending to be intent on geraniums, or on groundsel, her great-aunt had gone into the garden purposely to watch the consequential Captain strut along as though he thought the street belonged to him, and that his whiskers and his cocked-up head were the observed of all beholders.

Yet putting this and that together, why should he so grandly bow, or she so faintly smile? A smile so seldom seen—it came like something ominous, and, fitfully distinct, showed like a far-

off glimmer of the sun when there is not the least suggestion in the aspect of the sky to warrant its appearance.

Determined to be satisfied, and to know how far her suspicions were correct, Margaret placed herself one morning on the watch, when sure as fate, the instant the high-heeled boots were heard, and the small flourish of the cane was visible over a dwarf holly-bush, her great-aunt grew anxious about the health of her bird, or doubtful on the state of the weather; and stepping into the slip of ground fronting her by no means spacious dwelling, devoted herself to groundsel, or the picking of a stray flower left blooming in her garden.

"It affords me infinite pleasure," said the Captain, raising his hat, and stretching on tiptoe to look over the paling, "to find a lady of your abundant charity so pleasantly occupied. Even in the welfare of a bird, the peculiar goodness of your nature is conspicuous, and my sole wish is to change places with it, that I might be as carefully tended, and as fondly petted."

"Sir!" said Priscilla, her meditations no doubt broken in upon by the Captain's rather abrupt and familiar speech.

"I beg a thousand pardons for my presumptuous and most unceremonious address; but

expected to join his regiment in India. That same Frederick Arkwright, whose picture Margaret had pressed so fondly in her hand on the night they sat listening to the storm—that picture she had so constantly looked at when he, the stranger, first came to darken with his shadow her young-born hopes, and blight her expectations of a happy future by his presence.

Frederick Arkwright was of a good Yorkshire family, rich in blood, but poor of means, or with just sufficient means to enable them to give their sons the education of gentlemen. The elder son (as elder sons not unfrequently are) was educated for the Church, and with good patronage might in time expect to succeed to a good living. The younger son (as is also frequently the case) was intended for the army, and under the able instruction of a military tutor diligently pursued his studies. He was smart and handsome, possessed the better intellect of the two, and seemed likely to be the winner in the game of life, provided he had equal chances with his brother and was not unfairly dealt by at the starting.

The mother and father were as tenderly attached to one son as the other, and would willingly have kept them both at home; but unfortunately their means were not sufficient to leave them in the position of gentlemen, unless

they first placed them in some profession or honourable pursuit. Mrs. Arkwright's uncle was an East India House Director; Mr. Arkwright was no less fortunate in having a Rector for his uncle, and it was not unreasonable to suppose that the two old bachelors would use their interest in their nephews' favour—the one in the Army, the other in the Church—the moment they were requested to do so.

The Rector promised, but the Director did better, he performed—presented Frederick with an ensigncy in the Honourable Company's service, and said "he would look after him if he only showed pluck, and proved himself a fire-eater after his example." Now an ensigncy was something. It was a good beginning, and who knew what Colonel Dick might ultimately do for him, if he only humoured him a little, set down to his work with a will, and commenced studying for his profession without loss of time!

The Rector's aid was yet to come (as come no doubt it would), and secure their eldest born some comfortable living. Then, as a matter of course, and after the Rector was dead, the Bishop of the Diocese (or whoever had the living in his gift) could not do less, they thought, than confer it on their son, and place him in that snug rectory out on the Border, but close enough to

home for them to get to see him at stated seasons. *He* would not be called away to fight in dreadful battles, as their youngest son must fight in imitation of the Colonel; but peaceful, rich, and sluggish, keep up the family name, and do by his brother, as they felt that Frederick would do by him—the moment he was appointed Governor-General of India, and had place and pension at his command.

In flattering prospects such as these the father and mother indulged, while the younger son steadily pursued his studies, and applied himself manfully to work. The elder worked a little, slept a great deal, and, as a necessary preparation for what he had to do, never left off talking of it; and in anticipation of his coming honours amused himself by counting his chickens instead of bestowing on more substantial study a proper and sufficient care.

Frederick's tutor pronounced him a perfect genius; spoke of him as a young man singularly gifted, quick, and sharp, and as wishing to benefit by a course of instruction he, the tutor, pronounced superior to all others, and the result of a system peculiarly his own; depending chiefly on the way he brought his knowledge to a focus, and by taking in all wandering thoughts, all wayside glances, managed to absorb all mental

vision as it were, all independent speculation, and hold his pupil hard and fast upon the point he had in view.

That the tutor had some merit must be readily admitted, and though, perhaps, not so extraordinary a hero as he wished to be considered, he was a man of parts, and had had considerable experience. He was slim and straight, turned with military precision to the right hand or the left, swelled out his little narrow chest, and walked as though he had been marching on parade. An old, and most ill-requited soldier, he had won his honours by his blood—could boast of wounds gained in the Peninsula, and of the loss of three fingers by a sabre-cut at Waterloo; yet was but a half-pay lieutenant after all.

Invalided, and a martyr to rheumatism caught by camping in the worst of weathers, and from being compelled, as he too often had been, to sleep in the open air—compelled, as soldiers are, to shake and shiver, sleep a feverish sleep, and perform the duty of a clothes-horse, and air their wet clothes upon their backs, rendering them liable to attacks of after-suffering, such as the Lieutenant now suffered, yet patiently endured as his share of the spoils.

Although considerably below the middle

expected to join his regiment in India. That same Frederick Arkwright, whose picture Margaret had pressed so fondly in her hand on the night they sat listening to the storm—that picture she had so constantly looked at when he, the stranger, first came to darken with his shadow her young-born hopes, and blight her expectations of a happy future by his presence.

Frederick Arkwright was of a good Yorkshire family, rich in blood, but poor of means, or with just sufficient means to enable them to give their sons the education of gentlemen. The elder son (as elder sons not unfrequently are) was educated for the Church, and with good patronage might in time expect to succeed to a good living. The younger son (as is also frequently the case) was intended for the army, and under the able instruction of a military tutor diligently pursued his studies. He was smart and handsome, possessed the better intellect of the two, and seemed likely to be the winner in the game of life, provided he had equal chances with his brother and was not unfairly dealt by at the starting.

The mother and father were as tenderly attached to one son as the other, and would willingly have kept them both at home; but unfortunately their means were not sufficient to leave them in the position of gentlemen, unless

they first placed them in some profession or honourable pursuit. Mrs. Arkwright's uncle was an East India House Director; Mr. Arkwright was no less fortunate in having a Rector for his uncle, and it was not unreasonable to suppose that the two old bachelors would use their interest in their nephews' favour—the one in the Army, the other in the Church—the moment they were requested to do so.

The Rector promised, but the Director did better, he performed—presented Frederick with an ensigncy in the Honourable Company's service, and said "he would look after him if he only showed pluck, and proved himself a fire-eater after his example." Now an ensigncy was something. It was a good beginning, and who knew what Colonel Dick might ultimately do for him, if he only humoured him a little, set down to his work with a will, and commenced studying for his profession without loss of time!

The Rector's aid was yet to come (as come no doubt it would), and secure their eldest born some comfortable living. Then, as a matter of course, and after the Rector was dead, the Bishop of the Diocese (or whoever had the living in his gift) could not do less, they thought, than confer it on their son, and place him in that snug rectory out on the Border, but close enough to

home for them to get to see him at stated seasons. *He* would not be called away to fight in dreadful battles, as their youngest son must fight in imitation of the Colonel; but peaceful, rich, and sluggish, keep up the family name, and do by his brother, as they felt that Frederick would do by him—the moment he was appointed Governor-General of India, and had place and pension at his command.

In flattering prospects such as these the father and mother indulged, while the younger son steadily pursued his studies, and applied himself manfully to work. The elder worked a little, slept a great deal, and, as a necessary preparation for what he had to do, never left off talking of it; and in anticipation of his coming honours amused himself by counting his chickens instead of bestowing on more substantial study a proper and sufficient care.

Frederick's tutor pronounced him a perfect genius; spoke of him as a young man singularly gifted, quick, and sharp, and as wishing to benefit by a course of instruction he, the tutor, pronounced superior to all others, and the result of a system peculiarly his own; depending chiefly on the way he brought his knowledge to a focus, and by taking in all wandering thoughts, all wayside glances, managed to absorb all mental

vision as it were, all independent speculation, and hold his pupil hard and fast upon the point he had in view.

That the tutor had some merit must be readily admitted, and though, perhaps, not so extraordinary a hero as he wished to be considered, he was a man of parts, and had had considerable experience. He was slim and straight, turned with military precision to the right hand or the left, swelled out his little narrow chest, and walked as though he had been marching on parade. An old, and most ill-requited soldier, he had won his honours by his blood—could boast of wounds gained in the Peninsula, and of the loss of three fingers by a sabre-cut at Waterloo; yet was but a half-pay lieutenant after all.

Invalided, and a martyr to rheumatism caught by camping in the worst of weathers, and from being compelled, as he too often had been, to sleep in the open air—compelled, as soldiers are, to shake and shiver, sleep a feverish sleep, and perform the duty of a clothes-horse, and air their wet clothes upon their backs, rendering them liable to attacks of after-suffering, such as the Lieutenant now suffered, yet patiently endured as his share of the spoils.

Although considerably below the middle

blushing when she saw the young man, told her she ought to be ashamed of herself, and should know better, having had a daily opportunity of seeing how properly she (Miss Hindmarsh) conducted herself, and always had, ever since she was a girl; when, as she said, she had made a point of keeping the men at a distance for fear of getting herself talked about, as *she* was likely to be talked about, if she went on much longer in the shameless way she had begun.

Instead of frightening her as she expected, she found that Margaret had a spirit quite equal to her mother's, who in former times had held her own against her, and set her at defiance upon every possible occasion. Instead of being frightened and ashamed, she flew out at her, called her a hypocrite, and rated her for her duplicity in a most scandalous manner; said she had watched her behaviour towards Captain Nubbleton, and seen her smile and bow, although affecting to be busy upon other matters—which only made her conduct the worse, especially as she pretended to so much virtue, and dared to find fault with other people for doing what she did herself.

And was she to be spoken to by a chit like that? Was she to be lectured instead of lecturing, and called a hypocrite at her time of

life? No! So out she flew into a tremendous passion, stamped and raved, and vowed to be the death of her if she did not hold her insolent tongue and treat her with respect. But as that did not seem to have the desired effect, she left off abusing, and threatened to write home to her mother, who, as she said, would soon take her to task; or if she did not, and insist upon her apologizing, she might make up her mind to the consequences, as she was determined not to endure any further impertinence, but should wash her hands of that part of the family and leave it to its fate.

But as letters might bring answers, and as Margaret might write as well, and set her little freedom with the Captain in an improper light, Priscilla condescended to be pacified, and consented to forgive — that is, provided Margaret promised to be more circumspect, and not to blush so improperly, or, by returning glances cast on her by a stranger, make her, as her relative, a subject of conversation in the town in which she was supposed to be somebody.

But Frederick Arkwright was not a stranger— not in the sense her great-aunt regarded him— since upon the second day of Margaret's visit to Knaresborough, accident had placed them in rather a novel and by no means picturesque

situation; an accident sufficient to warrant future recognition such as had recently occurred, though not to place them on more familiar terms.

At the back of her great-aunt's house were fields and meadows, and Margaret had taken it into her head to wander in them unknown to that saintly lady, before she had taken out her curl-papers, or let her wiry ringlets fall down by way of ornament to the sides of her lank face.

There were cows and oxen in those fields, but one of the cows was vicious; so that on the very second morning of her venturing among them, when the grass was moist with dew, when the hedgerows sparkled and the sun's red rays came slanting from the East—just as she was about crossing the meadow, the cow ran at her, and before she could get away, or climb over a stile for safety, bore her to the ground, stood glaring over her, and, puffing rather savagely, seemed as if she had a mind to trample on her or toss her in the air.

What further damage might have chanced beyond the fright and the shake occasioned by her fall, those skilled in cow adventures must determine. But before the cow could injure her a sharp knock upon her horns, and a loud cry, effectually startled her; making her whisk her tail and scamper off, leaving young Frederick

Arkwright at liberty to raise the almost fainting girl, and place her for safety on the other side of the stile.

What with her delicately complexioned skin, first turned to deadly whiteness, then flushed as suddenly when she found herself so strangely rescued, and perhaps a little out of countenance at the unromantic adventure in which she had been engaged, Margaret looked doubly pretty, but slightly overcome; stammered her thanks, then almost fainted in her preserver's arms.

Fair or dark, old or young, it was all one to him, when he saw the cow rush at her, stoop down her head, and try to toss her on her horns. He only saw the necessity for assistance, and bounding over a fence arrived in time to give the beast that flick upon the horns, when he became aware of the unexpected beauty of that girl, struggling to rise, yet more inclined to swoon and lie down where she was.

On being questioned how she came there, and why the stupid cow had taken it in her head to run at her, Margaret at the first could scarcely answer; but gaining strength, she seemed more disposed to laugh at, than talk of her adventure, or the rather severe shaking she had sustained. But as some little time elapsed before she could regain her strength, or he could bring himself to

think she could be trusted by herself, such ordinary conversation sprung up between them as a young lady and a young gentleman might innocently hold—she so exquisitely fair, and he as handsome as Adonis.

She felt she could have talked with him for ever; but as the circumstance under which they had met was rather awkward, and as her great-aunt might wonder what had become of her, she thought it better to put an end to the conversation, and return indoors, now she felt perfectly recovered, and had almost forgotten all about the cow or the fright it had given her.

It was of no use his telling her she could not walk—she said she could. Then, at least, he said, "she had better take his arm." No; she was quite able to walk alone. But she thanked him very much—thanked him so earnestly and repeatedly, young Arkwright had much ado in persuading her he really had done nothing to be thanked for, although he liked to hear her say he had, and would gladly have remained there all the day, if only for the pleasure of listening to her.

But it was time to part; there was no help for it, so he had to submit; saw her go across the second meadow, get over a low stile, follow the windings of a pathway that led into the High Street, and disappear. But not before she had

looked behind and smiled, as if to thank him again for his kindness, as he stood waving his hand and wishing in his heart he durst follow her.

Oh, how he blessed that puffing and most vicious cow, and in her crumpled horns devised a thousand charms! Her nostrils were to him perfumed with odours, her breath as sweet as new-mown hay, and her angry eyes lit with a lambent flame, such as tips the darts of Cupid, or fires dear Hymen's torch! Of all the animals he had ever seen, that cow was sacred; thenceforth to be worshipped and made the subject of his dearest thoughts in preference to all others.

There was no merit due to him, but only to that most blessed of all occasions which had first tempted him to walk towards the field, and through the gap in the hedge behold the unequal struggle. Yet so it was; and hoping to arrive in time again to lift that fainting burthen in his arms (which like a form of fire appeared to burn him up, yet strengthened him with double ardour), he walked those meadows hopefully, passed up and down that winding path, and day by day shook off his sleep, to watch the coming of that beautiful girl whose eyes had melted him, whose form, radiant with grace and beauty, called thoughts of peace up in his breast, yet

drove it from him—utterly confounded salient angles, glacis, demi-bastions, half-moons, fosses, and counterscarps, together with those half a hundred other phrases daily instilled into his mind by Captain Nubbleton, who, in his capacity of military tutor, left no stone unturned in his desire to instruct his pupil how to blow up an enemy's fortress, or assault it, though Vauban himself had planned it, and were alive to take part in its defence.

Margaret was not less sensibly impressed by his extraordinary merits than he by her beauty. Bravery, youth, and abundant charms were his, attracting her young fancy, yet leaving her to dwell with sadness on his image, as she reflected on the improbability of ever meeting him again, unless in the event of some unheard-of accident happening to place him as suddenly and as romantically before her as the adventure in the field had done, either to renew her hopes, or give her reason to regret that she had ever seen him.

Oh, what a whirl of new-created fancies came crowding to her mind when she thought of him! What strange delights, what new-born hopes! Her aunt's wise lessons, her prudent admonitions warning her against the treachery and deceit of men, were all forgotten. They vanished at his very

sight. There was no deceit in him, no treachery, and no fraud; and Margaret felt she could have defied the world to find one speck or flaw in him, her unknown yet most valiant knight; whose eyes had looked so timidly, yet so earnestly, upon her, as if to read her soul, and pierce into her heart, compelling her to acknowledge a spontaneous emotion and confess herself subdued.

That meadow path was now a path forbidden, since he, she felt, would walk out there again and watch for her to join him. She could not go there any more—that was impossible. Yet once or twice she stole up to the corner of the hedge, peeped through the bushes, and stood to look across the fields. And all for what? To see him slowly pace along, his arms behind his back, and his eyes bent upon the ground. Or if, holding his head erect, he gazed round with an inquiring glance, and turned as if expecting her, she ran away for fear she should be seen—left him walking and waiting all day long, and week by week watching to no use.

At length, at the end of a month, when she had some thoughts of going out very early to tell him not to walk there any more, because it was utterly impossible she could think of meeting him—upon that very afternoon, as if to repay

his watching and bring him face to face with her—she saw him pass and stop and look in at the window as if his soul were in his eyes and seeking her he loved.

Her great-aunt was at the window—her peevish, prudish, and most puritanical great-aunt—looking out upon her own account, and terribly annoyed at finding herself neglected by any one who had the audacity to look, and not at her. The Captain, too, she had lost her chance of ogling him, as of course she felt it would be highly improper to leer at him in the presence of that young man holding his arm, looking over her shoulder, and staring into her room; so that, for the sake of appearances, she was obliged to slam down the window, and deprive herself of the felicity she expected of exchanging salutations with her beau.

Margaret saw her turn, and, observing her angry glance, flew upstairs to avoid contention. But when her great-aunt followed, burst into the room, lectured and scolded her, set herself up as a pattern of female excellence, then broke into abuse of the male sex generally, and of that young man in particular, Margaret lost patience. Hence arose that storm, so quickly gathered, and as speedily to be dispelled by her knowledge of her great-aunt's hypocrisy, and the way she had

hoped to hide her duplicity so as to conceal her design upon her under-sized admirer by resorting to any artifice she thought would mask it.

The Captain meanwhile steadily pursued his game, and, though fully alive to the ardour of the chase, he calculated his chances, and kept in view his coy, but rather antique bird. Where she was shy, he was proportionately daring, and, vigorous in his efforts to entrap, soon found the means to accomplish his object by resorting to an expedient that did great credit to his inventive genius.

It so happened that the Captain had a friend who was on speaking, but not on visiting terms with Miss Hindmarsh. If he could only persuade his lady friend to invite his inamorata, and his inamorata accepted the invitation, he felt the battle as good as won. Tea and scandal were rather tempting, and so they proved; for on his friend's inviting, Miss Hindmarsh at once accepted; said she should be exceedingly happy, but not quite liking to leave Margaret at home for fear of the young man, requested, and of course obtained, permission to take her with her.

Everything was as it should be; and now he had a chance of meeting her without the impediment of the garden fence to keep him sepa-

rated from his charmer, the Captain made up his mind for victory; buttoned his little coat over the padding, slapped at it as if to stimulate his courage, and after practising his smiles for an hour in his square of looking-glass, felt satisfied he should make an impression, and bring his fair one to terms in no time.

Miss Hindmarsh, on the contrary, felt unusually timid. She had a very strong impression in her mind that she had been asked chiefly to meet the Captain, and that he had requested his friend to ask her for that express purpose. Military men were used to stratagems, and no doubt he had planned the whole affair by way of ambuscade, thinking she would fall into it, and give him an opportunity to declare a passion he was evidently scorched up by.

It was certainly very trying, but she made up her mind to go for all that, and prepared to grace her visit by an elaborate display of all the odds and ends of finery she could muster, stored away in a variety of drawers and boxes, packed in lavender, and brought to light after a seclusion of more than twenty years. She had the opportunity to use them to advantage now, and Miss Hindmarsh was not the woman to neglect a chance that had never happened to her in her life before.

The time employed in dressing is a mystery we dare not unfold. But she was dressed at last—dressed to her perfect satisfaction, and, as a contrast to Margaret, was certainly worth looking at. Attired in a plain white dress, her niece had a single rose in her hair, while her great-aunt had a whole flower-bed scattered over her, and looked for all the world like a May Day Queen out for the evening.

At last, all things being prepared, she went in full expectation of creating a sensation, and of calling attention to her remarkably juvenile appearance; and on arriving met, not only the Captain, whom she *did* expect, but that good-looking and most presumptuous young man, whom she did *not* expect—that most impertinent person who had fastened his eyes on Margaret, or her silver salver—she did not quite know which—in a most audacious manner.

But what was her surprise to Margaret's? who, on seeing him, could hardly believe her senses, or trust her eyes, thinking they played her false. Dropped from the skies a new-born happiness seemed to dawn on her, and a delight to fall on her, which proved so impossible to resist, that pretending not to see the glances her aunt cast on her, and indifferent to her frowns and nods—designed to tell her to keep him at arm's-length,

and snub him as a person quite beneath her notice—she did exactly the reverse; accepted his attentions with a smile, and never felt half so happy in her life as when he was sitting by her side and speaking to her in the gentlest tones she had ever heard.

Her great-aunt was occupied; the Captain kept her so; and intent on listening to her own perfections (which, as a rule, she was quite prepared to believe in), she so far forgot her niece that, with the exception of a sidelong glance or two to see what she was doing, she did not make known her saintly horror of her forwardness after her usually frigid and forbidding manner. By her neglect of this, and charmed out of her senses by the compliments the Captain paid her, she afforded an opportunity for Margaret and Frederick Arkwright to exchange those sentiments she and the Captain were trying to exchange, but found difficult to adapt to their rather antiquated and certainly unloveable ideas.

At length, after passing a most delightful evening—after Priscilla had melted to the Captain, and the Captain had melted to Priscilla; after sandwiches and sherry, tarts and biscuits—the time arrived for luxury to cease and home to be thought about; when, faithful to his charge, and brisk as a bumble bee about a sunflower,

the Captain offered his arm and begged to be permitted to conduct Miss Hindmarsh home; the road being, as he assured her, dangerous, and a military escort necessary to insure her safety, and deposit her at her little garden gate.

After once or twice declining, Priscilla timidly consented to link her bony arm in his; when bent on conquest the Captain led the advance, strutted with his precious charge before, and left Margaret and young Arkwright to bring up the rear. This, as a faithful pupil, he accomplished to the satisfaction of his superior in command, although slightly out of the line of march and a little farther off than was necessary. He could not of course pretend to be so thorough a tactician as his master, or have so accurate a knowledge of the sex; yet he won his honours fairly, and by strict attention to his duties, gave evidence of a desire to learn significant of a man born to success.

The ice thus broken, and the first plunge made, the rest came naturally and easily enough. Devoted to her new admirer, and given over to the thoughts of courtship, Miss Hindmarsh paid little attention to her niece, but bent on securing her Captain, threw off some portion of her grimness, essayed the juvenile, and gave herself up to sundry little playful arts; she sighed—smiled—

was melancholy, and then again grew light and airy, read Watts's Hymns, and thus inspired, endeavoured to find a rhyme to Nubbleton, but not succeeding, tried how she should like the name, and if Priscilla Nubbleton would look well at the bottom of a sheet of paper.

The attachment existing between Margaret and Frederick Arkwright only wanted time to ripen into love; and as that time had been given by her great-aunt's indifference to what they were about, so long as she could pass her own agreeably, their affection took a deeper root, and promised to be as lasting as it was warm. All things looked hopefully for the future; time and opportunity seemed but to increase their store of love, when an unlooked-for accident placed an insuperable bar to the fulfilment of their wishes.

Her aunt had quarrelled with the Captain! She had actually forbidden him the house, and, determined to keep him out, ordered the carpenter to put a padlock on the garden gate. The window no longer opened as of old; no flag of truce (in the shape of a cambric handkerchief) greeted him as he passed, attracting him to stay and talk, or step inside and have a glass of currant wine to refresh him after his walk; but all was cold as charity, and gloomy as a house of correction.

That currant wine—so sweet, so luscious, and

so full of potency—had to answer for it all! It was worse than poison to her now, and its baneful influence a thing to shudder at and abhor. Harmless as she had thought it, and as a compound innocent, its sugared taste had tempted the Captain to indulge beyond his usual stint; when, fired by its fume, and strengthened by its power, the disreputable Captain summoned the spinster to capitulate!—demanded her then and there to lay down her arms, or enfold her in them, and become his better, though most bony half.

Thus far the Captain's terms agreed with hers and fully met her approbation. But when he imprudently assailed her cherished store, demanded to have under his control those matters supposed to constitute the sinews of war and furnish the supplies, Priscilla bridled, stood on the defensive, and indignantly commanded his retreat from her most saintly presence!—vowed he had obtained the honour of her acquaintance by an artifice worthy only of a Jew eager for the flesh-pots of Egypt, and that her Three per Cents., and certain household property she was known to possess, had been the original cause of his pretended worship and mercenary attempt to win her; prompting him to a demand, the like of which she could hardly believe, though she had heard it, but began to think she had not.

Beaten from his entrenchments, and compelled to a disastrous retreat, the Captain viewed his cut-off treasure with a longing eye. He would no more have taken possession of that dilapidated fortress (which, in the person of Miss Hindmarsh, he had thought of taking) without a chance of spoil than he would have stormed a sand-bank or sat down to a windmill. He had wasted the ammunition of his eyes on her forlorn virginity to no use. He had besieged, but had been driven back; and seeing no hope of pillage, he buttoned his coat preparatory to protesting his regret to find his dear one so impregnable at the one point he had thought assailable, then strutting into the garden, vowed to punish the whole sex through her, and, at all events, to live in silence if he could not live in ease.

Outraged, insulted, sneered at by her dearest friends, and laughed at by her enemies, Priscilla had yet a pleasure in the hope of making others as miserable, or more so than herself; and on young Arkwright presenting himself before her, with her niece hanging on his arm, said she was surprised to find such familiarity existing between them; declared she would be no party to it, but would write at once to London, inform her mother of her daughter's strange behaviour, and relieve herself from all responsibility in the matter.

Write she did, and by that very post; stated her inability to control her niece's daughter, and begged her to relieve her of all blame should she neglect her caution, or permit this improper familiarity to assume the nature of an engagement. A familiarity, as she said, that instant brought to light, and discovered by the merest accident, when all the time she had had a perfect knowledge of what was taking place, and knew about their stolen meetings, but did not dare to say a word for fear Margaret should expose her own flirtation, and anticipate the time when she could declare herself betrothed to Captain Nubbleton, and affianced, if not to a giant, yet to a gentleman of fascinating manners and decidedly captivating person.

The next day but one a letter arrived from her mother with a request that Margaret should go home at once. Absence, Mrs. Rushbrook wrote, would effect a cure—induce her to think differently, and enable her to get the better of a foolish fancy, brought about by change of scene, and the novelty of emotion arising out of it. But as her father was shortly expected home, the position of affairs could then be placed before him, when, should Mr. Arkwright's prospects warrant an engagement with his daughter, arrangements might possibly be entered into agree-

able to all parties, though for her own part she wished it clearly to be understood, that she entirely set her face against the match, and should at all times object to any man marrying her daughter whose profession, however honourable, was so little likely to insure to her or her family the happiness they expected from her union.

But the bolt was shot, and, out of sight of mother and of friends, remained to rankle and keep the wound still open! To tear or pluck it out too suddenly might be to tear her heart away as well, and leave poor Margaret a miserable woman for the remainder of her life.

CHAPTER VII.

"THE CASKET."

On her return to London, Margaret was subjected to a severe cross-examination by her mother, who wished to know how she had formed an acquaintance with Mr. Arkwright, under what circumstances she had met him, and the reason of her not having written to let her know what was taking place during the whole time she had been away.

Margaret tried to excuse herself, but her mother would not be satisfied, since, as she said, her aunt must have had very good reasons for writing to tell her to put a stop to it. This was too much, and Margaret felt perfectly justified in explaining that her aunt not only knew all about Mr. Arkwright and herself, but had winked at their attachment, until her quarrel with the Captain had changed her plans; when, finding he would not marry her unless he had her money, she had thought proper to write to her mother, in order to avoid being found fault with for having encouraged it.

Shocked by her aunt's duplicity, and out of

patience at her making, as she said, "such a fool of herself," Mrs. Rushbrook was not the less alarmed when she reflected how that elderly maiden's inclination to matrimony might endanger her chance of benefiting by her "little property," or, in the event of Priscilla outliving her, then of her daughters succeeding to it.

Her aunt's obstinacy was well known, and that she delighted to abuse what some one else thought well of. To win her consent to anything, it was first necessary to pretend to be averse to it; whilst to get her to oppose, it was equally important to lead her to imagine you had a particular inclination to it. By yielding to Margaret's solicitation, Mrs. Rushbrook felt she should be taking the direct course to drive Miss Hindmarsh into the Captain's arms on any terms, or call forth her amiable antagonism some other way, and do away with the only hope she had of being remembered in her will.

She knew her aunt; she did not know Frederick Arkwright. But she knew enough to be satisfied that he was the very opposite of the man she should wish to be her daughter's husband. He was poor; he was about to go to India; and, prejudiced against him on those accounts, she lost no opportunity of speaking slightingly of him; forbade her daughter even to

mention his name, and, by siding with her aunt, thought she had not only done the right thing effectually to break off Margaret's engagement, but had taken the readiest means to ingratiate herself in her favour, by way of preparation to the place she hoped some day to find herself set down for in her last will and testament.

Frederick had begged but to be heard; he had desired nothing further; and, writing to Mrs. Rushbrook of his hopes and expectations, explained that his happiness entirely depended on her sanctioning his marriage with her daughter. He confessed his want of fortune, but said he had youth and perseverance: and that his friends' exertions in his favour would stimulate his endeavours to merit promotion in the profession he had chosen. His father and mother, he stated, had consented to his wish, and, as Miss Hindmarsh was well known to them by report through her long residence in Knaresborough, they looked upon an alliance with a member of her family as being not only desirable, but in every way agreeable.

He said nothing about his brother's indignant protestation against the match, nor of his hatred io the whole body of Dissenters. They were to him people so debased in character, being seceders from the Established Church, that he could not endure the thought that a member of his family

should be allied to one of theirs, or to any one indeed not strictly orthodox and wedded to the Church whose tenets he professed, and which said Church he was prepared to uphold as the only one fit for respectable people to belong to.

His father and mother would rather that Frederick had waited until he became a General at least, before he thought of marrying; but, as he appeared restless and impatient, neglected his studies, and, as Captain Nubbleton assured them, "it was only by marrying early a man could hope to rise in his profession, and that to his being a bachelor he attributed a want of proper recognition of his own merit," Mr. and Mrs. Arkwright consented to their son's request, and immediately observed a change in him for the better, as early and late he kept his tutor hard at work, and distracted his elder brother by his wakeful habits and the general activity he displayed, as contrasted with his own.

Mrs. Rushbrook in her reply was cold and formal. She professed herself highly flattered by his offer, but dwelt on her daughter's imprudence as much to be lamented; and did not conceal her dislike to the profession he had chosen, nor her fears for her daughter's happiness (presuming they were married and forced to live in India). But as it was necessary to put him off indefinitely,

and place, as she thought, a barrier between them, she begged to inform him, that until Captain Rushbrook returned, no further steps could be taken; but that the moment he came back he would of course communicate with him. In the meantime she entreated him as a gentleman to abstain from correspondence with her daughter, and await patiently her husband's arrival. Then, satisfied she had put him off for some time at least, she obtained her daughter's promise also to abstain from writing; and, as her engagement was a subject upon which they could not agree, said they had better not talk of it for the sake of all parties.

This arrangement having been tacitly agreed upon, a studied silence followed; and, as no allusion was ever made to her daughter's lover, Mrs. Rushbrook began to hope that she had forgotten all about him. But Margaret had not forgotten him; on the contrary, she cherished his remembrance the more fondly because forbidden to speak of him, and though obliged to be silent before her mother, she enlarged on his merits to her sister; entered into a league of confidence with her, and declared her mother's prejudice to be not only unjustifiable, but undeserved by her poor Frederick, who, she said, was the soul of honour, and deserved the best of treatment instead of the worst.

There was only one occasion on which that silence had ever been broken, or an allusion made to her lover. It was, when her mother had dwelt upon the danger of her father's calling, and of the fears she entertained for his safety, at the time the rain came beating on the windows and the wind rushed by in a tempest, as they sat in terror and suspense listening to the storm.

But when upon that very night the tidings came of her father's being cast away, and of a new admirer having arrived commissioned by him to claim her hand, a wild conception filled her mind that, matched and mated to that unknown stranger, some terrible result would follow. That, predestined to some calamity, her union with him would as surely bring it about as that her father's ship had foundered, whilst he, her father, by wishing her to be wedded to that man, had but fufilled some portion of his destiny arising out of his desire unconsciously to interfere with her anticipated happiness.

Possessed by dreamy speculation, and distressed by the events so strangely brought about, Margaret went up to her chamber the moment Mark Ellerton was heard to pass along the street in company with his "dog," leaving behind the influence of his visit in her mother's heightened colour, and the perplexed, though anxious, look

apparent in her eye; then throwing herself upon the bed, she bewailed the sadness of her fate, and the necessity which appeared to draw her close and closer, linking her, as by some unseen chain, to him her father had wished that she should marry.

Were then her hopes so soon to fade, and her pictured happiness to pass into forgetfulness? Were all those rainbow tints, those points of brilliant light, to be smeared out, and in their stead the darkling figure of this man to rise in ominous contrast, like a daub of inky black, griming and defacing what up till then had been so softly blended and so exquisitely toned?

She thought she would write to Frederick and inform him of her position; then if he should answer, as of course he would, and propose a secret marriage as the only means of preventing their separation, she knew the weakness of her heart too well to question her readiness to fly away and bind her fate irrevocably with his.

But with the notion of her selfish views of peace and comfort came the thought of mother and of sister left to bear the load of poverty alone, and the accumulated grief arising from her father's death. Could she so soon forget their sufferings and his loss, or take an unfair

advantage of their position to contract a marriage against their counsel and advice?

She could not bring her mind to this. It was too unnatural, too selfish, and too suggestive of a forgetfulness of that love she had always borne towards her father, and of the love her father had borne to her, even to think of. Then, finding it impossible to sleep, she devised a thousand and a thousand fruitless schemes by which to relieve herself from that stranger's solicitations, and escape the penalty of his love. For of love she knew he would talk by the way he had fixed his eyes on her, as if to read her heart, and satisfy himself it was worth his having; his deep-toned voice impressing her with a sense of awe, and his almost prying look, apparent to her even in the darkness of the room to which she had flown for refuge and reflection.

Day by day she expected him to come again—expected and yet dreaded his approach; whilst her mother, dressed in her widow's weeds, sat as if expecting him as well, and hoping he would come. But she never spoke of him—never alluded to him, yet by her manner seemed to be dwelling on the terrible uncertainty of their position, and thinking that if Margaret married him, how her union with a man so rich might lessen the load at home, and make her younger sister's

prospects more flattering than they appeared to be at present.

She was equally silent as to the promise she had made to write to Frederick, but which promise she had never kept; never once alluded to him, but suffered him to die out and be forgotten (as she hoped) by Margaret and herself. And yet the stranger never came, nor wrote, but keeping himself aloof, appeared as if he expected to be courted and solicited before he condescended to visit them.

He had forgotten the presents he had promised, and indeed everything connected with them; though Mrs. Rushbrook still insisted he would come, and said he would have been there before had Margaret been less haughty, or had she expressed herself more gratified by the gifts he said he would send, to show what a brilliant fortune she might secure for herself, and be able to assist her family at the same time, if she only listened to his suit.

This constant watching, this ceaseless dread, at last proved so distressing that Margaret grew nervous and excited; and drawing to her corner by the fire as soon as the work-table had been arranged and the lamp was lighted, sat as in a dream, fell into a fit of painful thinking, or starting, fancied she heard the stranger at the door,

and saw his shadow darken the entrance to the room, while his despised follower, peeping over his shoulder, kept looking at her as if to be certain he should know her again if he had only a chance of meeting her on some future occasion.

But at the end of a fortnight a letter came from Mr. Ellerton, not, as they expected, appointing a time when he would call, but to express his regrets that business of importance had prevented his paying his respects before. In the meantime, and to prevent their entirely forgetting him, he informed them he had forwarded a parcel, containing a few articles of no great value, but which he hoped Mrs. Rushbrook would favour him by allowing him to present to herself and daughters, in proof of his regard, and to afford Miss Rushbrook an opportunity to inspect a few of the trifles he had collected in the East.

It was not in human nature to be indifferent to gifts so handsomely presented. Mrs. Rushbrook forgot her grief, and even Margaret appeared to wake up from her trance, when the servant brought a parcel into the room and said it had been left by the same wild-looking creature she had asked to come in out of the cold and sit by the kitchen fire, on the night the strange gentleman called to see them.

The parcel was so heavy the servant had to

be assisted to place it on the table; and so securely fastened it took some little time to undo it, before they could gratify their curiosity and inspect its contents. But when it was undone, and the contents were actually displayed, a pile of such magnificent fabrics met their eyes, they stood enchanted, and were anxious to know who was to have the first choice of the stranger's presents, and who the next.

Upon the top of the costly pile lay an Indian shawl, so elaborate in its device and so rich in its embroidery, that Mrs. Rushbrook positively smiled when she understood that it was meant for her, and took it up accordingly. A second shawl was for Margaret, a third for Bertha, and the whole of the contents were arranged for distribution in the same order.

The parcel contained silks and muslins, Cashmere shawls, India fabrics in profuse variety; and dresses of the most costly and magnificent material; but exceeding them all in beauty was a beetle-winged robe of such extraordinary brilliancy, that Margaret felt herself not a little flattered when she saw her name attached to it, as it was indeed to everything that was either more costly or better than the rest.

But as they searched and searched, they found lying in the midst of tissues worked in threads

and complete in everything but the ear-rings, she hooked them on as well, then throwing the beetle-winged robe across her shoulders held herself erect, and in her girlish vanity thought how beautiful she looked and what a difference a few ornaments made in her appearance. Then with a half-regretful sigh she pulled off the rings, unclasped the jewels from her neck and arms, and seated again in her old corner by the fire, kissed her lover's portrait with increased affection—kissed it with a penitential kiss, as if to atone for the fault she had committed, and to beg pardon for her forgetfulness.

But as even jewels must give place to sleep—though to judge by the looks her mother and sister still cast at them, sleep was the last thing they thought about—the lid was closed, and the key turned in the lock.

As soon as the casket had been put away, and after the shawls and dresses had been carefully folded, Mrs. Rushbrook turned to Margaret with a triumphant glance, and wished to know if she did not think a gentleman like this—a gentleman profuse even to extravagance—was not better worth her notice than a miserable ensign, whom she had met by chance in some out-of-the-way corner, in that wretched hole of a place, Knaresborough.

Margaret said nothing; but, fondly pressing the thin gold rim edging that ensign's portrait, she saw the casket taken away without a tear, without a sigh, and with scarcely a regret.

But in her dreams the diamonds clustered in a mass of light; or, linked and bound together, spanned overhead in one bright arch of variegated hues. It was so bright, so exquisitely beautiful, she almost cried when she saw that arch fall down; its glittering particles melt and fade away, and leave her sighing for their loss.

It was late before she woke; and, even when she woke, she thought she must be dreaming still, or was not thoroughly awake, when she saw the casket on her dressing-table, the lid thrown wide open, the case just slightly tilted, and the jewels glancing back the sunlight in ten thousand specks of light completely dazzling her! They were all there, the bracelets, rings, and necklace; and that magnificent beetle-winged robe she had been so charmed with the over-night, and all looking so bright and beautiful she hardly knew how to contain herself.

Whoever had placed that casket and the dresses in the room, had had a perfect knowledge of the effect they were likely to produce upon her girlish vanity. The temptation was not to

be resisted, and leaping out of bed, she took the jewels from the case, and once again inspected her treasures with increased delight.

And were they all her own? those sparkling gems, those splendid, costly dresses? It was not perhaps a proper thing to do, hating the stranger as she did, and loving Frederick so fondly, to take them up so eagerly, and clasp that snake-like necklace round her throat, or throw the beetle-winged robe across her breast and view herself so proudly in the glass. But she did it for all that.

Could she again put on that robe, stand smiling before the glass, behold that necklace round her throat, the rings upon her hands, the bracelets on her arms, and not think kindly of the giver? or at the least think a little more favourably of him than she had done, and believe that if he were not quite worthy of her love, he was, at any rate, deserving of her gratitude and thanks?

Turning to inspect the rest of the presents, and to see which shawl, which robe, or gold-worked tissue would suit her complexion best, she noticed a letter lying on the floor, most probably dropped by some one who had left the room before she woke, or who had purposely placed it there for her to read.

It was from her great-aunt Hindmarsh! She knew it at a glance. There was no mistaking her sharp, angular hand, though in the present instance she appeared to have written with a sharper pen than ordinary, and taken extra pains to prevent its spluttering.

CHAPTER VIII.

ANGUS MACLEOD.

After looking at it for some time, she took up the letter, and holding it in her hand, appeared undecided what to do.

Would it be proper to open a letter dropped accidentally by her mother when she quitted the room after having placed the jewels and the dresses opposite her—hoping perhaps she might be tempted to think a little more favourably of Mr. Ellerton by a fresh sight of his presents?

Whether dropped by accident, or left purposely, Margaret did not stay to inquire. She knew there must be something in the letter respecting herself or her lover, and, without more ado, she opened and read it—read what she wished she had not read, yet read it the more eagerly because she felt it was a scandalous aspersion, and not at all a likely thing for Frederick to do.

What could her aunt mean by it! He had never injured her, and yet she assailed him as if he had been guilty of some frightful depravity, and declared that he was no sooner tired of one profligacy than he took up with another; and, by

outraging all propriety, made himself the common talk of the town. It was not possible that Frederick could be capable of such conduct, or reasonable to suppose all she said of him was true, yet she could not drive away the thought that there must be some ground for the accusation, or her aunt could not have instanced the particular misconduct of which he had been guilty.

"It was not only his wildness," her dear great-aunt wrote, "but he was actually rebellious, and defied his tutor, and disgraced him upon every possible occasion. Now his tutor was, as everybody knew, a gentleman. He was poor, but he was estimable. He must be poor," she said, "to be obliged to submit to the degradation of becoming his instructor, and demean himself by accepting his father's money. And all for what? To have that good-for-nothing pupil do, what the Captain never would do, and which he never could be suspected of doing—be seen walking in the fields at the back of her house looking up to her dressing-room window most impertinently, and eyeing the house as if he had a design to break into it, and do them all some bodily injury."

This was a slight relief to Margaret. Those meadows and those fields were full of pleasant

recollections; and while her aunt talked of *them*, she was content to believe in Frederick, and trust in him as implicitly as before.

"But the worst of all," her great-aunt wrote on, "was Ann the cutler's girl, that some one said, he saw walk arm in arm with one of the Arkwrights (and he thinks it was the youngest) more than a month ago across those very fields; and now the sinful creature has her eyes full of tears, and carefully avoids meadows and men as well. It is not to be endured, Susan, that such a man as this should come into our family with nothing on his back but an Ensign's beggarly coat, to bring disgrace on it by cutler's girls and other girls worse than the cutler's, as I am told, and not so fond of crying as this wicked wench! But it's of no use talking! Spite of the lessons of your dear departed father, and the lectures, and the holdings forth which I personally attend to, these hussies will fly into the arms of the devil, and seem to take delight in nothing else."

Thus far her great-aunt's letter was limited to scandal, and enlarging on her own most saintly virtues. Had she confined herself to these, the reputation she attacked, and the scandal in which she indulged, had made little impression. But she had spoken ill of Frederick—called him a libertine, and accused him of being mixed up

in low amours with cutler's girls, and people infinitely beneath him. She could make allowance for her great-aunt's exaggeration; she knew from old experience the danger of believing everything she said, but for all that she felt there must be some truth in the report, and that Frederick had shamefully and cruelly forgotten her.

The spark had fallen upon a nature excitable to the least suggestion of inconstancy or neglect, and hurt and pained, jealous and indignant all in a breath—with thinking she had been slighted, and how differently she had behaved to him—she wrapped the folds of her Indian robe closely about her, and taking the letter in her thickly jewelled hands, she read again.

"The news you tell me, Susan, of your husband being drowned is, no doubt, a trial to you, and a tribulation difficult to bear by those who cling to the fleshly vanities of life. But as your pious father often said, when speaking to his flock, 'All flesh is grass,' and something after about 'being cut down and mowed.' And so it is with Robert! He is cut down and mowed, and cast out of the fulness of this land! It becomes you, therefore, to endure with resignation and be thankful for your pain."

"And have you not reason to be thankful," she continued, "when you have such comfort, as you say you have, through this strange gentleman come over the sea on purpose to marry Margaret, and who, if she has any gratitude, ought to be thankful she has escaped the snares of the evil one (I mean the younger Arkwright) to be enfolded in the arms of a man rich enough to buy up his whole family (which I should not advise), and dress his 'dog' in better clothes than a beggarly ensign's coat, such as he must wear."

Some time elapsed before Margaret could continue. The allusion to the stranger had had a most extraordinary effect on her, and she had to wait to recover herself before she could read the letter to the end.

"Had she but taken my advice, and done as I desired, I should have told her at first, that a poverty stricken wretch like him was only fit for cutlers' girls, and such as would be glad to marry anybody as would make an honest woman of her. But for Josiah Hindmarsh's daughter's daughter—she to fall in love with an ensign, and he not worth a shilling but what his father and mother have saved to go his half in—is a tempting of matrimony, as I may say, and a some-

thing too dreadful to bear thinking of. Could she not, as other women have been obliged to do (by prudence, not for want of offers, understand that, dear Susan) have had the patience to wait for some twenty or thirty years, and control her passions until this wild young fellow had eaten away his liver, and returned a general or a nabob—if he ever lives to be one—which I doubt. She could then have exhibited the natural desire of a Christian to relieve the wants of others, and, in the character of a nurse and wife, have comforted a cripple, and relieved a husband at the same time. But it is like the girls, dear Susan, of the present generation; though I cannot but regard your chastisement as a proper one, for marrying against everybody's wish, and for having a grown-up daughter, when by right you should only be thinking of a husband—to bring the plagues of Egypt upon yourself as well as on —Your affectionate aunt,

"PRISCILLA HINDMARSH."

By the time Margaret had finished the letter she became so excited she was obliged to rise and walk about to recover herself. She walked rapidly and impatiently, trailing the Indian dress across the floor, utterly indifferent what became of it, and careless of everything since

Frederick had proved so worthless and so false.

And could he so soon forget her? Forget those pleasant meetings when her great-aunt was fast asleep and ignorant of her being up and out, and walking in the fields? Had he forgotten those stolen whispers, and the silent love they had exchanged by only looking at each other on the night her great-aunt visited the captain's friend, and when he had contrived to meet her there? And then the homeward walk! That lingering behind, and the warm pressure of his hand folding and clasping hers! Was all this to fade away so soon, her constancy to be slighted, her faith to be neglected, and herself abandoned to make room for cutlers' girls, and creatures of so low a stamp as that? Had she kept her own pure love intact, opposed her father's and her mother's wishes, and made the stranger understand she never could be his, to meet with a return like this?

Could it, indeed, be true, or had her great-aunt maligned her lover to suit some purpose of her own, and thinking to make her hate him too? Had she, given to tittle-tattling and to talebearing, heard something she could not substantiate, but, taking it for granted, informed her mother of it, hoping she might be able to induce her to break off her

present engagement, and accept the addresses of a lover better suited to her fancy?

Distracted by the thought, she determined to wait with patience until she received further and more reliable evidence of her lover's inconstancy before she accepted her aunt's version of his profligacy. Should he, on further investigation, be proved as worthless as she said he was, then, but not till then, she resolved to cast him off, as he had cast her off; receive the stranger's attentions favourably, and perhaps, in time, consent to marry him.

She finished dressing, and, locking up the casket, turned to go downstairs, when she suddenly remembered that she had left her lover's portrait under her pillow in her anxiety to look at the jewels and the dresses, and would have forgotten all about it had she not been reminded of it by the merest accident.

Placing the miniature in its usual resting-place—next her heart—she went down to breakfast; and, putting her great-aunt's letter on the table, told her mother she had found it on the floor, but never said a word of having opened and read it.

Affecting indifference as to whether she had read the letter or not, Mrs. Rushbrook poured out a cup of tea, and then, pretending to be surprised at seeing her look so pale, inquired if she

had slept badly, and, on being answered "No," declared there *must* be something the matter with her, as she did not eat her breakfast.

But as Margaret said she was quite well, with the exception of a slight headache, and did not feel inclined to eat, Mrs. Rushbrook took no further notice, but felt satisfied she had read the letter, and that the "little headache" she complained of was owing to the cutler's daughter, and the half a dozen other daughters, with whom, according to her aunt, the young ensign was supposed to be intriguing.

Here was a chance for Mr. Ellerton! His presents had come just in time, and unless Margaret proved an exception to the generality of her sex, his liberality would have a good effect on her; more especially as something had happened to set her at variance with her old lover, and make her more inclined to listen to a new one.

"It strikes me, Margaret," said Mrs. Rushbrook, as she sipped her tea and put another lump of sugar in it, "that Mr. Ellerton must have had a great regard for your poor father if we may judge by the kindness he shows his family. He is evidently a man of considerable ability, and has undoubtedly a great command of money. Had your poor dear father been alive, there would, of course, be no occasion for

assistance. He would have protected us, and cared for us, and relieved us from our present misery! But he—dear Robert!"

In trying to work upon her daughter's feelings, she unconsciously touched upon her own, and, bursting into tears, could not speak another word.

After a short time devoted to the usual restoratives, she was able to go on again.

"It would be useless, my dear child, to pain you by a repetition of the objection I have to your marrying a man who would be compelled to reside abroad, and where you, of course, would have to live with him. I have already explained my views upon the subject, and the powerful dislike I have to the army as a profession. It is not possible for any man (a young man and a poor man especially) to rise in the service under such disadvantages as you would impose upon him. As a single man it would be difficult enough, but for a married man—a man with a family perhaps——"

"But, mother——"

"He may be perfectly honourable and deserving—that is, as honourable and deserving as a wild, reckless young fellow can be; but who can answer for the sins of youth, or hope to check its folly and extravagance? Young men, we know, are easily led astray, and easily tempted.

We also know that their indulging in improper fancies frequently brings misery on their too confiding wives, or on those who have trusted their affections to them, but who, as is too frequently the case, often discover when it is too late that they have only been trifled with to make room for some improper and fearfully immoral connection."

Had there been any doubt of Margaret's having read the letter, her flushed neck and face would have supplied the proof. As it was, she sat, scarlet with confusion, and so painfully affected, it was of no use her trying to conceal it.

"Young men, as I have said before (Mrs. Rushbrook was perfectly unconscious of any change in her daughter) are naturally of a vicious turn. It is only when men have arrived at a proper knowledge of the real meaning of their transgressions they can be said to be worthy of the name of husbands, or are able to settle down to one unselfish and confiding love. You have an example of this in Mr. Ellerton, who, as far as I can judge, has arrived at that happy time of life when men, whilst they retain their passions, are circumspect, and less likely to trifle with a wife's anxiety, either by improper conduct or neglect."

"He is forty at the least," said her younger daughter, with an expression as much as to say,

" he was a great deal too old for her or Margaret either."

" And what of that? Are men at forty to be considered old? On the contrary, at forty, men are in the prime of life, as women are at twenty."

" Was father forty when he married you?" inquired Bertha.

" No; but then he had had considerable experience, and was able to withstand the snares and fascinations of the world, quite as well as if he had been older. But that is nothing. One man's good or bad is no proof of another's good or bad. Yet judging from appearances, and from what I have heard, I am inclined to entertain a most favourable opinion of Mr. Ellerton, and shall always consider it my duty to think well of him, as he was your father's friend, and trusted by him to bring home his last dear wishes."

A shuffling outside the door fortunately put a stop to further discussion, or Mrs. Rushbrook might have found herself in a minority when speaking in the face of an opposition evidently dead against her on the important question of the proper age at which a man should marry.

The interruption had been occasioned by the delivery of a letter, which, the servant said, the strange gentleman's man had brought and was waiting for an answer.

It was, indeed, from Ellerton, and asking permission to pay his respects the following evening, when he trusted to have the pleasure of finding Mrs. Rushbrook and her daughters in perfect health, and at liberty to receive him.

The letter must be answered of course, but as Mrs. Rushbrook complained of rheumatism in her shoulder, and as Bertha had cut her finger, Margaret was told to sit down and write (at her mother's dictation), and inform Mr. Ellerton that they should be delighted to see him at the time mentioned, when they hoped to have an opportunity of thanking him personally for the handsome presents he had been so kind as to send them.

Whether the rheumatism was real or pretended mothers alone can tell. But as Margaret wrote an excellent hand, it may be presumed that Mrs. Rushbrook availed herself of a sudden twinge as an excuse to avoid writing, and get Margaret to write in her stead—to show what a beautiful hand she wrote, and to let Mr. Ellerton see what an accomplished wife she would make.

Margaret wrote the letter; then seized with sudden curiosity, she slipped out of the room to take a look at the messenger and see how far he realised the description given of him by his master, and if he were really so uncouth as he had stated him to be.

Her mother was pouring out a glass of wine for the "poor fellow," and did not observe her leave the room, so that on getting into the passage she had an opportunity to cast a quick glance at him as she ran upstairs to her room, and saw him leaning with his back against the street-door, lounging and stretching, and half asleep with waiting, though, to judge by his manner, not in a hurry to shift his quarters or move from where he was. She also noticed that his hair was long and ragged, while his listless, almost sullen look, struck her as indicating either obstinacy or indifference, and as a sign that his intellect was of the lowest order, and his perception none of the quickest.

He was strongly built, but of no great height, while his lolling against the door convinced her he would not object to lie down on the mat and go to sleep if he only had the opportunity. There was no vitality in his eye; no cunning, and not even a glance of curiosity, as far as she could detect, during the time she had for observing him. He seemed so utterly lazy and indifferent—so careless of what people thought, and what they did, she began to question the correctness of the comparison made between the dog and him, and thought that the dog had some reason to complain of the simile made at his expense.

She was half way up the stairs when she heard the dining-room door open, and on leaning over the baluster, saw the servant give him a glass of wine, and the letter she had written at her mother's dictation. He drank the wine without thanking the girl, put the letter in his pocket, then swinging back the door, slammed it after him, and without more ado went off; leaving the servant indignant at his want of manners, and Margaret to reflect that out of the whole ship's crew he should have been the one to be saved, and the only person she seemed intuitively to have a dread of without knowing wherefore.

CHAPTER IX.

AN UNEXPECTED CLAIM.

ANGUS was not a beauty. He was ugly, but not so terribly ugly as Margaret appeared to think, nor so repulsive in his aspect as she would have led people to imagine had they seen her look out of her bedroom window and watch him down the street as though she apprehended some dreadful calamity was about to fall on her through him or by his agency.

Poor faithful Angus, whose only fault at present was his attachment to his master; his listless idle manner, his drowsy look, and the way he propped himself against the door as a convenient resting-place. Surely there was nothing so peculiarly terrible in this; and yet she looked out after him as if she half expected he would return and endeavour to do her some personal injury.

And was it possible a wretch so stupid and so dull could have the passionate love of life Ellerton said he had? Could he have such full enjoyment of that life the thought of losing it filled him with despair? It was not much, she thought, to lose a life, surrounded as it too often is, by pain and

misery, and hardly worth the keeping at the best. It was not much—a bucket of the ocean, a pinch of the sea sand—when reckoned against the millions of the earth who die and are not missed, are never inquired for, and scarcely even thought about. Yet this dull, heavy-looking man could value his life, hold by it, and cling to it, as though the parting with it were something horrible, and his dread of death a constant, an engrossing fear.

It was no fault of his if his master loved her. He was not responsible for that; and yet she linked the two together, and thought of them, as though the love of the one and the gratitude of the other were destined to destroy her peace, and make her whole existence dependent on the union existing between them.

There was a brutal ruffian on the other side of the street driving a poor child before him, shouting and cursing, and threatening unheard-of vengeance on any one who dared to come near him. But he was nothing when compared with Angus. He was simply a ruffian, and could be punished as he deserved to be. But Angus was a thousand times more terrible. His very footsteps seemed to leave a trace of fire and blood behind, and though she closed her eyes and tried to forget that she had ever seen him, she could not help thinking that she saw him

still—saw him and dreaded him as much as ever.

It was impossible to explain this feeling; she only knew it was so. It was no doubt foolish and unreasonable to be so prejudiced against a man she had never seen before, and perhaps should never see again; yet absurd as it appeared to be, she could not help thinking of him, nor cease being tormented by him, the more she endeavoured to forget him.

Then, as if her one small chance of happiness depended on her immediate action, she resolved to write to Frederick and satisfy herself of his constancy or forgetfulness without delay. Her mother had promised to write to him, and tell him all, but she had not done so. He knew nothing of her father's death, and, unacquainted with her position, was left in ignorance of that stranger who had come at his express desire to make her an offer of his hand.

To remain in her present state of suspense she felt to be impossible; and as her mother's silence furnished her with an excellent excuse, she determined to write and let him know what had happened; explain the sad calamity that had befallen them, and how she was situated.

She could not, of course, hint at what she had heard of his profligate habits. She could not

even touch on his presumed neglect of her, nor refer to it, without compromising herself, and leading to an open rupture with her great-aunt. Yet, to avoid it was not so easy, nor so agreeable to have to write to a lover in terms of fondness, or speak of her own truth, at the very time that she doubted his, and had reason to suppose that he had proved himself unworthy of her affection.

Should Frederick still declare his passion unabated—write to her in terms of fondness and regard—reply (as she felt sure he would do) and tell her of his disappointment and misery at not having heard from her before—all her fears would vanish! She would be happy and contented once again; able to endure her mother's constant talking in the stranger's favour, and, certain of her lover's faith, be prepared to resist temptation with the utmost fortitude.

Should he, on the contrary, betray the slightest wavering; lead her to suppose he wished their engagement broken off, or by a coldness of expression induce her to believe what had been said against him, her mother should have her way. She would consent to sacrifice herself to please her, and, in hopes to contribute to her comfort, accept the life of misery she felt must follow her marriage with the stranger.

Should Frederick not reply, let him not blame

her if she accepted another. It would be entirely his own fault. He would have to answer for the misery and the grief to come if, through his forgetfulness and neglect of the vows he had sworn, he drove her into the arms of a man whose thoughts were not her thoughts, whose temper was opposed to hers, and whose suspicious disposition, ill-assorting with her own, might lead to jealous doubts and ceaseless misgivings the one of the other.

By way of showing Mr. Ellerton the importance she attached to his visit, Mrs. Rushbrook had ordered a nice little supper to be ready by the time their business matters were over, when they could pass the evening in a little pleasant talk; sit down to their meal, and feel so perfectly at home, who knew how soon he might wish to become a member of a family so thoroughly united, and so perfectly well-mannered.

Margaret was to sit next him, that was imperative. Bertha next her mother, and to be sure and keep herself in the background (she always did), so that Mr. Ellerton might have an opportunity to converse with Margaret, and perhaps convince her he was not so disagreeable as she supposed him to be. But on one thing Mrs. Rushbrook particularly insisted, that Margaret should wear one of the rings he had given her, to

show how much she valued his presents, and how uncommonly handsome her hand looked when properly set off.

But as Margaret would not consent to this, and said it would appear a slight to her father's memory to be dressed in jewels when they were in mourning, Mrs. Rushbrook was forced to be contented; but for all that, she did not seem to think her daughter's objection the only one she could have urged had she been at liberty to say exactly what she thought.

"Oh, by all means, my dear, please yourself, and do not let me be supposed to have a voice in the matter. I only spoke out of consideration to Mr. Ellerton, who would naturally expect to see some of the beautiful rings he sent you worn on the occasion of his visit. But if it can't be, why of course it can't; you know best I daresay, and have more regard for your poor father's memory than I have. Had he lived he would have exacted obedience at a word, whilst I have almost to go upon my knees to beg of my children to do what they ought to do without my telling, and which they would do if they had any regard to their own advantage. But they haven't. They are obstinate and self-willed, and wont bear to be taught by people older than themselves, who are naturally more thoughtful and experienced."

Mrs. Rushbrook finished her oration by a violent fit of sobbing, and only stopped short of tears when she reflected what a fright she would look if Mr. Ellerton happened to come a little earlier than they expected and saw her eyes looking as red as the dining-room curtains.

She had another reason: Margaret was quite as ready to cry as herself, and what a scene they should make between them at a momentous time like that, the most important perhaps in the course of their whole lives, and when they ought to endeavour to appear to the best possible advantage.

It was six o'clock. He had promised to come at that time, and by a quarter past, she doubted not he would be there.

Were not those his footsteps halting at the door? and that his knock? Of course they were; and that the same low whisper he had spoken in on the night he asked for her before? She was positive and certain of it! Margaret thought so too, trembled and turned pale, but changed as suddenly when the servant brought in a card and said a gentleman wished to see her mistress.

"Blissett, Mr. William Blissett," said Mrs. Rushbrook, looking at the card. She had never heard the name before, and had not the remotest notion who it could be.

What were they to do? The table was already laid for supper in the next room, and it would look positively ridiculous to ask the gentleman in there. It was a most unusual hour for any one, not intimately acquainted with the family, to call; but since he must come in, and as his business might be presumed to be of importance by his coming so unseasonably, Mrs. Rushbrook told the servant to ask the gentleman in, since the sooner he came in the sooner they should get rid of him.

The servant disappeared, Mrs. Rushbrook and her daughters seated themselves with as little appearance of being put out as possible, and preserved as strict a propriety of demeanour as under the circumstances they could be expected to assume; when the door opened, and in walked a little white-headed old gentleman, that she at first took to be a begging parson, or the New River Waterworks, she could not quite say which.

The gentleman made a bow. Mrs. Rushbrook motioned him to be seated, and sat prepared to listen to what he had to say.

But this required a little preparation. Instead of at once informing her of the nature of his visit, the little white-headed gentleman first took off his gloves, smoothed them out on his knee,

rolled them up, then rubbing his little white head of hair, he expressed himself as follows:—

"You will excuse me, madam, I am sure—and you, young ladies, I am satisfied will be equally good-natured, and forgive my presenting myself before you without an introduction. But as there were two ways of doing an unpleasant thing, I thought you would be better pleased if I chose a neighbourly in preference to a professional way. I would also wish you to understand that, in whatever character I am compelled by my instructions to make myself disagreeable to you, either as a lawyer or a neighbour, you will at least believe I would wish to prepare you for most distressing news as pleasantly as I can."

And could that little white-headed old gentleman sit there patting his gloves, and not take into consideration the agony he had kept them in, talking of what they could not understand? What could he mean by it? What could he be thinking of? Or had he really some dreadful news to communicate, and some fresh calamity to announce.

Was it (as Mrs. Rushbrook half began to fear) to tell them that her intended son-in-law had gone out of his mind, or worse, had committed suicide;—that, afraid of her daughter's refusing him, he had precipitated himself over London

Bridge rather than expose himself to her unkindness.

Convinced it was something dreadful, she startled the old gentleman by saying—

"For gracious sake, my amiable and dear good sir, what business can you have, to make this preface necessary, as you say it is? Has he really dashed himself to pieces against the parapet of the bridge, or blown his brains out; or what other terrible calamity has happened to so generous a friend to make us tremble as we sit, where for the last quarter of an hour we have been expecting him, and thought he had come when you knocked, and so very like him, I could have declared I saw his hand upon the knocker."

"Madam!" said the gentleman, opening his eyes and pocketing his gloves, "I am afraid I have not had the happiness to make myself understood. What I said had certainly no reference to a parapet or a bridge, neither did I refer to any one half so foolish or so mad as to blow his brains out—provided he had any, which I doubt. I merely stated—and perhaps you will permit me to explain again—that I should prefer acting towards you as a friend rather than as a lawyer. That, instead of sending a most unpleasant person to call on you with a slip of

paper to enforce this claim, I should wish you to forget that I am professionally engaged against you, and to believe that I am anxious to render you every assistance in my power in this most unfortunate affair. This was the explanation I was about to offer, and——"

"But, sir, you give us no explanation. You do not even hint at what you mean," the widow interrupted, forgetting the little opportunity she had given him to be explicit, and how she had stopped him in the midst of what he had to say—"and I feel bound to tell you that your extraordinary visit at this inconvenient and unusual time, is not at all a proper one for ladies to receive. We have enough trouble of our own to bear, without listening to something horrible about somebody else whose business you have to transact, and who you say will call to enforce something, which for aught I know may be equally preposterous with the notion of his having destroyed himself."

"I wish with all my heart it may prove as preposterous as you suppose," replied the lawyer. "But it is not. And though as a matter of business I am bound to look after my client's interest, yet in this particular instance I should have been better pleased had they employed some one else to sue for the recovery of a debt out of

the estate of a departed friend, or distress his widow at so unseasonable a time."

"If, sir, you would wish to be clearly understood," said Mrs. Rushbrook, growing pale and nervous in spite of her endeavour to appear calm, "I must beg of you to be saving of your words, and as concise as possible in reference to this preposterous notion of any claim any friend of my dear departed husband can have on me. He had but one friend in the world—and when you knocked, I thought——"

"May he prove as good and true a friend, as I am afraid your exigencies require. But since you wish me to be brief and to explain, I will at once inform you that I have this day received instructions from Messieurs Jarvis and Taverner (whose London agent I have the honour to be), on behalf of Middlemist and Co., merchants of Bristol, to whom the estate of the late Captain Rushbrook (I deeply sympathise with you on his loss, dear madam) is indebted in the sum of five hundred pounds for goods supplied to the late Captain, and shipped by him to Jamaica. Now there is no possible question but that this sum would have been duly paid had the Captain returned to England. But, unfortunately, he did not; and therefore Messieurs Jarvis and Co. have empowered me to institute legal proceedings on

the part of their principals, who are creditors to the estate, for the recovery of the debt."

"Creditors! But I tell you I have no creditors, and never had. I don't know what a creditor means, and don't wish to know. So Taverner and Co. and Middlemist and Co. had better mind what they are about and not talk nonsense of this sort, or they may repent it," said Mrs. Rushbrook, not quite knowing what she said, but determined to say something to let him see she was not to be imposed upon.

"Now, being a neighbour," resumed the little white-headed old gentleman, "and having heard of your bereavement, I thought, instead of writing as we lawyers do, sharply and formally, that on my return from the City I would take the liberty to inform you personally (I hope not unkindly) of the most distressing duty I am called upon to discharge in accordance with the instructions received this day from Bristol, so that you might reflect upon the matter at your leisure, and come to some arrangement by which a part, if not the whole, of the claim could be settled."

That something dreadful was about to fall on her, Mrs. Rushbrook was now convinced. She could not make out precisely what the lawyer said, but she knew enough to be satisfied she was ruined and undone! that the little she

had left of worldly means would soon be snatched away, and her daughters and herself be without a home!

Margaret saw her mother's agony and her sister's grief; and as she watched the lawyer's compassionating look felt certain they were completely ruined. She did not weep, but kissing her mother fondly, tried to cheer her up, spoke hopefully and confidently, and assured her their condition was not so desperate as she imagined, but that she and her sister would work for her, and keep her house above her head, let the worst come to the worst.

Then, from watching their despair, the thought came stealing over her, that if those jewels were indeed her own, how quickly would she part with them, pay her father's debt, and make her mother and her sister happy. But they were not. They were meant to deck Mark Ellerton's bride, and unless she were his bride, she felt she would submit to any degradation rather than keep them, however tempted, and in spite of anything her mother could say or do to urge her to the contrary.

She turned to look, partly attracted by a movement of the lawyer's, and partly with a view to comfort her mother—when she saw to her amazement that Ellerton was already in the room.

CHAPTER X.

A FATHER AND HIS TWO SONS.

ELLERTON advanced a step towards her, on seeing that he was observed, but as suddenly drew back when he saw how pale she looked, and that her mother and her sister were in tears; whilst the white-headed old gentleman, fidgeting on his chair, first turned to him, then to her, and by a variety of twistings seemed to denote extreme discomfiture; as he first pulled out his handkerchief, then put it back, and when he really seemed to want it, took out his gloves instead, and wiped his eyes with them.

That that little white-headed gentleman had to do with the state he found the widow and her daughters in, admitted of no dispute. Ellerton saw it at a glance, and beckoning him into a corner, he conversed with him in whispers for a few minutes, then gave him his card, wrote something in his pocket-book, and presented himself to the astonished eyes of Mrs. Rushbrook, who, glancing up, beheld him through her tears, and looking dreadfully unhappy, burst out crying afresh.

Ellerton took her hand, and whispering some-

thing in her ear, smiled encouragingly at Bertha —as if to tell her to be at ease, and not distress herself—then moving towards Margaret he took her trembling hand in his, held it with a gentle pressure, and watched her as she blushed with the tenderest regard.

But the most extraordinary change was in the little white-headed old gentleman, as he first rubbed up his hair, then drew his hand across his eyes; pulled out his handkerchief, and turned to look at something on the wall; blew his nose violently, then turning about displayed as pleasant a countenance as ever old gentleman yet wore; his eyes only half dried, and his hair twisted, as if a hundred pocket corkscrews had been growing out of his head.

"Do good by stealth and blush—never mind the rest," said he, "so long as good is done it little matters how or when. And that reminds me—I can't exactly say why it does, but it does—that Mrs. Blissett will be wondering where on earth I have got to, and if the whole of Barnard's Inn hasn't been burnt down, and my unfortunate carcase left crackling like a skin of parchment in a blaze of my own making."

This most extraordinary jargon might, as Mrs. Rushbrook felt, have been abbreviated with advantage. But as she saw how delighted the little

gentleman looked as he shook hands with Ellerton, and how heartily Mr. Ellerton shook hands with him, she thought she would take no notice, but permit him to wink and twinkle his little grey eyes at her, as if by that extravagant and improper conduct he wished to convince her she had no occasion to be alarmed, and that Middlemist and Co. were as good as nowhere.

Without attempting an explanation as to why he looked so pleased or winked and nodded so improperly, Mr. Blissett prepared to go; expressed himself delighted to have had the honour of making her acquaintance, and offering his hand (Mrs. Rushbrook hardly knew what to do with it), shook it cordially and exclaimed—

"It was with the greatest possible regret that, as a neighbour, I felt bound to make you miserable. I did it with the greatest repugnance, my dear madam; but I am happy to say my neighbourly visit (little as I expected it) has been attended with a most satisfactory result. I wish you a very good evening, madam. I wish you young ladies an equally pleasant one, and may we all (this with a sly glance at Margaret) have as true and excellent a friend as (here it was necessary to take the card out of his pocket, for he had forgotten the name)—as Mr. Ellerton. And now I really must go, or Mrs. Blissett, as I

said before (she will be delighted to see you, I am sure) will be sending the bellman after me to have me cried, to say nothing of the tea getting as cold as ice, and the muffins tough as leather."

It was not until the street door had shut out the little lawyer that Mrs. Rushbrook was able to comprehend what had really happened. That fussy little gentleman had so bewildered her, first by Middlemist and Co., then by Taverner, she thought he must be mad! But now he was gone, she began to distract herself by impossible conjectures again, until Ellerton informed her he had made an appointment with Mr. Blissett at his office, when he had no doubt the matter he came about would be arranged to her entire satisfaction.

She knew what that meant well enough; that he had made himself responsible for his friend's debt, and meant to relieve her of all difficulty by paying it himself. Yet to be relieved by a comparative stranger; to be obliged by him, and feel how helpless she was to assist herself, shocked her sensibility and rendered her a little less delighted than she otherwise would have been at this additional proof of her hoped for son-in-law's unbounded liberality.

Ellerton refused even to be thanked; laughed away all notion of obligation, and set them

laughing too, when he explained how he had arrived at the door just at the moment the servant opened it to a runaway knock; and, seeing them in the room, he had taken the liberty to step inside; and, how unobserved, had been a witness to the distress the little lawyer's visit had occasioned them.

Margaret had been aware of this before her mother; and, knowing how he had relieved them, although her pride was hurt, she, at the same time, fully appreciated his kindness and did ample justice to his generous conduct towards them; and, thanking him for the service he had rendered them, begged him to believe that nothing short of necessity could excuse the obligation under which he had placed her poor dear father's most unhappy family.

But, as Mrs. Rushbrook thought a change in the conversation might be agreeable, and as she particularly wished to know how her future son-in-law had passed his time since the occasion of his former visit, she said—

"Your business engagements are less pressing than they were, I hope, and will afford us the opportunity to see you often. That is, as often as you choose to come to this humble roof, from which God in his wisdom has removed the prop, and forced us to be indebted to your kindness in our time of trouble."

"You will be glad to know that they are less urgent than they were, though my affairs still require time and ability on the part of my solicitors to bring them to a settlement. The chief difficulty I have had to encounter has arisen from the neglect of my father to make his will. Dying intestate, his freehold property and estates here and abroad are left in this position; that, though I may be able to acquire possession in default of a more immediate heir, yet should my brother, against our expectations, be proved to be alive, or to have married and had a son, then that brother, or that son, can oust me from possession, and call on me for restitution of all and everything I may have improperly enjoyed during my occupation."

"You have a brother, then?" said Mrs. Rushbrook, with rather an uneasy look.

"I had, but he is dead; there can be no doubt of that. It is a story for a fireside, and, as I have no secrets, I should wish you to know something of my family, provided you will allow me to explain as much as I know of it myself, so that there may be no mystery between us, and no concealment on one side or the other."

"If it will not be troubling you, and you are quite satisfied it is not to gratify any idle curiosity of mine or my daughters," said Mrs. Rushbrook.

"On the contrary, I wish particularly an exchange of confidence; and, as I hate all shifting, and think a blunt confession infinitely better than a half-and-half avowal, I shall be glad of an opportunity to explain, with a view to avoid all future misunderstandings. Depend upon it this course is the best. It saves the possibility of after trouble and annoyance, since, by explaining everything at first, all doubts are cleared away, and subsequent disagreement prevented. Where this is not the case, and mutual confidence is not implicitly adhered to, it is only natural to suspect that what was not confessed at first (should it be afterwards discovered) was concealed for some sufficient reason, or because some disagreeable history rendered concealment necessary."

And here again Margaret detected that strange peculiarity of eye and mouth she had noticed on his previous visit; explaining what her father had said of him, and realizing to the full the character he had given of him. She saw it as plainly as if it had been written on his face; and, observing the distrustful look with which he eyed about, felt satisfied that nothing would ever remove an impression he had once formed, and no human power lessen the natural suspicion and distrust peculiar to his character.

"See," he said, as Margaret took her seat in

her old corner by the fireplace, and he sat next to her, "how readily we fall into our proper places as though we were used to them, and were indeed a family party met to listen on this long autumn night to the story of an old man and his two sons; to hear the tale told by the surviving son of how that father died, and how his elder son was lost, leaving the younger to explain their history, to dwell upon their endings, and enlarge upon his own wild doings, before he follows them to the world to come."

"God's will be done!" exclaimed the widow, "and may penitence and a life of humiliation prepare us for our end."

"My father was an only son, and inherited one of the largest estates in Jamaica; but as it was necessary personally to superintend its cultivation, he went abroad, married, and, by the time his son was ten years old, had become one of the richest proprietors in the West Indies. But as he wished to send his son to college, to qualify him for the prominent position he hoped he would ultimately take, he returned to England, left the management of his estates to the care of a trusty factor, and, accompanied by his wife and son, resolved to settle down in his native land, enjoy his riches, and make his only boy a credit to his name."

"Had he taken my advice, he would first have instructed him in religious exercise, so that he might have been able to keep Beelzebub at his feet, and trample him in the dust," said Mrs. Rushbrook.

"His ambition was to see his son rise to be a dignitary of the Church, or an ornament to the Bench. But in the event of his not evidencing the requisites for professional eminence, then to make him a merchant; and, as he had the means to back him in the largest undertakings, hoped he might eventually aspire to civic honours—become a City magnate, and known throughout the world as a man famous for his extensive dealings and prosperous career."

"Only to think of that! And with all that quantity of money at his command! Now what I mean to say is, had that money been properly applied——"

"He found him, to his disappointment, not only averse to study, but disinclined to trade. He had no taste for either, and, as he openly exclaimed against a counting-house or an office, my father had some difficulty in knowing what to do with him, until in despair at his wilfulness, he made up his mind to return to Jamaica to see what effect a change would have on him. Everything was arranged for his departure, and the

ship about to sail, when his wife fell sick and died."

"She was infinitely better off. Snatched from this sinful world, she——"

"His mother's death sobered his son a little, and my father began to hope he might turn over a new leaf, leave off his idle courses, and busy himself in the management of the fine estate he had recently purchased in the Weald of Kent. He would do neither, though he was fond of field sports, and appeared to delight in the amusements of a country life. These suited him, and, having nothing else to do, he soon became the most idle and do-nothing fellow for miles about; disliked everything that had the aspect of regularity about it, and would not even sleep in a house if he could find a haystack or a hedge to sleep under instead."

"I never heard of such a thing! Sleep under a hedge!"

"The perversity of children (we know it for a fact) by one of those unknown rules of nature, increases the affection of parents instead of diminishing it. And so it proved with my father and his son. The one anxious to please, the other careless and indifferent to attention or regard. Nothing suited him, nothing contented him, unless to lead a wild and wandering life,

and keep himself aloof from all association with his home. These grew at last so noticeable, and his wanderings so frequent, my father let him have his way, hoping he might grow tired of them, and settle down after a time a wiser and a better man. But he grew worse and worse; went off for weeks and weeks; returned but to go off again, and add to his father's misery when he thought of the impossibility of curing him of his wild and wilful practices. Now, as nothing was known of where he went or what he did during his absence, my father resolved to have a watch set on him, so that he should at least be satisfied what became of him, and in what way he passed his time. The information he received puzzled him more than ever. Unwilling to believe a son of his could have taken such a fancy in his head, he determined to convince himself by the evidence of his own eyes whether the report were true or false; took upon himself the office of a spy, and, guided by the farm servant he had employed to watch, went out in the middle of the night to seek his truant son."

"He found him?——"

"Exactly as he had been told—asleep under a tent, and camping with a troop of gipsies in a sequestered spot a mile or two from home."

"Gipsies! How very strange," said Margaret.

"And very wicked too!" said Mrs. Rushbrook. "Only to think of a child of mine sleeping in so preposterous a manner! Fancy one of you, my dears, sleeping on a bundle of straw in a gipsy's tent, which is more like the top of a carrier's cart than anything I know of."

"It was some time before my father could believe his eyes, or satisfy himself it was indeed his son; but, after pondering awhile upon the strangeness of his conduct, he came to the conclusion that he had been attracted by some bright-eyed damsel of the troop, who, thinking he might be fool enough to marry her, had led him on to become a convert to her Bohemian creed, and prove as smoke-dried and indifferent to household comforts as herself. Passing from tent to tent, he saw old women, children, and dark, sallow men, all fast asleep, but not the girl; rough-coated horses tethered to the ground, carts propped on their shafts, and dogs tied to the wheels, or crouching under them, but which, on hearing him approach, barked savagely, and roused the sleepers to look and see what had alarmed them—if some tramp were on the prowl, or their horses broken loose—when, startled from

his sleep, and sitting on his bed of straw, the son beheld his father, the father his son."

"A second Bampfylde Moore Carew," exclaimed the widow.

"Convinced of the uselessness of contention at a time like that, and in such company, my father beckoned to him, told him to follow, and took him home. Resolved to keep him for the future more under his control, and if possible to put a stop to his herding with gipsies, he shut him in a chamber built like a guard-room to the house, and flattered himself he should be able to prevent his wanderings by keeping him locked up by night and watched over by day; to exhaust him by constant exercise, and then, perhaps, he fancied he might be glad to sleep in his bed, and not in the tent where he had found him. For a day or two all went well enough. The son promised to obey, and my father entertained a hope that his discipline had tamed him down. But on the fifth morning he had the mortification to hear that he had escaped, though by what means he had quitted the chamber remained a mystery, for the door was locked and chained, and the window, independent of stout iron bars set firmly in the stonework, was far above his reach. How, then, had he got away? His gipsy friends could not have pulled his body through the

grating, and the door could not have been forced without some signs of violence. But there were none; nothing was disturbed, and only the unpleasant fact remained that he *had* escaped, but by what means it was useless to speculate. Incensed at his disobedience, and roused at last to assert his authority, my father determined to bring him to his senses, or have done with him for ever. There was no time to be lost. Accompanied by two or three servants, he set out prepared to carry him back by force, if necessary, and reclaim him from his wild habits, let the consequence be what it would."

"Did he succeed?"

"He found, to his disappointment, the camp deserted, the gipsies gone, and the whole brood vanished! He had hoped to catch him in his old quarters, and asleep; but he saw nothing of him nor the gipsies. Nothing remained to tell of their visit but burnt-out ashes, bones, old rags, and a battered kettle or two left behind as useless. All else were gone—horses, dogs, carts, tents, and the whole community of gipsy life swept away as if by magic, and the old green lane deserted for some other place."

"But your father?——"

"Followed them from one haunt to another, beat up their quarters in far outlying places, and

hunted for them half over the land, yet never succeeded in coming up with them, until, worn out by grief and disappointment, he gave over the pursuit, forbade his son's name ever to be mentioned, publicly announced his intention to disinherit and disown him, but mourned in secret, and, forgetting all but his old love for him, cherished his memory with his usual fondness."

"Poor gentleman! I can't help feeling for him!" said Mrs. Rushbrook, availing herself of the pause to express her sentiments on the ingratitude of children generally, and of her own especially. "He did everything, I am sure, to teach him better. But children now-a-days are not to be taught. They know better than anybody, and parents must hold their tongues for fear of making matters disagreeable."

Without waiting to discuss the relative merits of parents and of children, Ellerton resumed his story, and slightly offended Mrs. Rushbrook by his indifference to her observation after the pains she had taken to say what she had said, in hopes to make her daughter a little more kind to him.

"Effectually to draw his mind away from thinking of him, and fill his vacant heart with a new affection, my father looked about for a second partner; succeeded in his wish, married a second time, and had a second son. But the

mother died at his birth, and left my father for a second time a widower."

"Dear! dear!" said Mrs. Rushbrook, "what a dreadful thing to be sure! May I take the liberty of asking if you were the second son, or, more properly speaking, the son of the second marriage. If so, I have no doubt you entertained a proper feeling of respect for your poor mother's memory."

"Had she lived, I should have been less spoiled, no doubt; but wanting a mother's care, I shared the misfortune most children undergo when left to the injudicious love of a doting and over-indulgent father. I was petted and spoiled, never trusted out of his sight, and, in short, became so perfectly wearied by fondness that I grew tired of it; took every opportunity to escape his notice, and, boy-like, slipped away to enjoy my freedom whenever I had a chance."

"He made you sensible of his kindness at last, I hope?"

"He tried, but failed. I had been so long used to do as I liked, I did not seem to care whether he liked it or not, but broke out passionately whenever I was baulked. He tried again and again to coax me over, but as I had heard about my half-brother and his wild tricks, and rather fancied his ideas of independence, I

determined to break my leading-strings, and follow his example."

"You were a very naughty boy, I am afraid."

"I was at all events a self-willed one, and having once made up my mind to anything, was not easily persuaded to the contrary. My father and I could not agree too well on any subject. He wanted one thing, I another, until at last we came to an open rupture, and decided to part. He stormed and fretted, but finding no good come of that, fell into thoughts of his lost son, and sent me off to sea. Here I was kept in check a little, and had to submit to discipline; but I soon got used to that, grew strong and daring, and was never so happy as when I had a chance of showing my courage against the French, by whom our merchantmen were at that time frequently attacked. I liked the excitement and the risk, and venturing too far one day, was nearly taken prisoner, but thanks to the coming up of our convoy, got off. My father heard of it, and frightened at my foolhardiness, summoned me home with the intention of placing me in a more peaceful occupation. But the time had passed when he could hope to change my bent, or fit me to become the sober citizen he wished me to be. I found him strangely altered—moody and morose—and instead of the indulgent

father I had left, I met a harsh corrector and a severe disciplinarian. It was easy to perceive I had lost ground in his affection, and that I ill supplied the place of his favourite son, who, being always held up as something wonderful, and talked about, created in my mind a jealous hatred to his very name, and a suspicion that, spite of all my daring and deserts, I was to take the second place, whilst he, the scapegrace follower of the gipsies, held the first. As my father did not conceal his preference, nor I my annoyance, we disagreed so frequently, I begged to be relieved from all further bickerings, and resolving to work my way up in the world without his help, said he might keep his riches for his vagrant son, whom he might some night find robbing his hen-roost or stealing his neighbour's sheets. This nettled him, so off I was packed to India, where, assisted I am bound to say by his valuable interference in my favour, I was enabled to acquire a position favourable to my views in life. Having unlimited command of money, by using it wisely, I realized a fortune on my own account; traded in diamonds and in the costly produce of the Eastern Empire, and, succeeding beyond my hopes, had some thoughts of taking up a lasting residence at Madras, surrounded by the luxury and state within my power to com-

mand. But India was not the place for me. It was too provocative of ease and sensuality to suit a man of my activity, and determined to show that, spite of favouritism and of elder brothers, I could realize a position for myself, I resolved steadily to pursue my fortune and benefit by a change."

"But your father——"

"Wrote to say he wished me to undertake the management of his West Indian estates, and as I had already determined on quitting India, I consented. The rest you know almost as well as I do, with the exception that, after residing some years in Jamaica, the news of his death hastened my return at the very time West Indian estates had become seriously depreciated in value in consequence of the passing of the new Bill for the emancipation of the slaves. I set out without loss of time, but on arriving in England met with an unexpected difficulty in obtaining possession of his property, my father having died without making a will; so that I have had the greatest trouble to contend with in establishing my claim, owing to the uncertainty as to what had become of his long-lost eldest son, who, presuming he were alive, could of course step in and seize on everything. That uncertainty no longer exists; and now, after passing

so many years abroad adding to my father's wealth and increasing my own, I look forward to the enjoyment of what I have fairly earned and rightfully inherited, in spite of my father's desire to keep his property for his eldest son, on the chance of his being alive. But I am in possession at last; I am legally acknowledged as his sole remaining heir, and in my fortieth year look forward to a career of blessing and of peace, and at forty I hope to marry, and have a wife willing to promote my happiness and share it with me."

"I thought so," said Bertha to herself. "Forty is what I said he was, and forty he is."

CHAPTER XI.

THE GREEN LANES.

"And did your father never hear what became of his good-for-nothing son?" Mrs. Rushbrook inquired, at the end of rather a long pause.

"Never."

"It is strange," she said, staring at the fire, as if expecting a coffin or a purse to drop into her lap and tell her all about it. "It is very strange," she said again, though this time with stronger emphasis. "It would, of course, be much more satisfactory for you to know for certain if he were dead or alive, so that you might put on mourning, or come to an amicable arrangement and share the property between you."

As Mrs. Rushbrook appeared to take so deep an interest in his brother and what had become of him, Ellerton offered to relate a few particulars of his search, and satisfy her curiosity that he had done everything in his power so obtain some clue to him; until, gradually led away by the excitement of his story, he recapitulated the chief part of his adventures, and let her know what he had discovered in connection with him.

It had, of course, been highly important to obtain every possible information respecting him, as, until he could produce evidence of his death, the law would not recognise his own claim, nor sanction his taking possession of his father's property. The first thing had been to find out some facts relating to his personal history, to his personal appearance, and his movements following the time he left his father's house.

His first inquiry had been made among his father's tenants and such of the old servants as could speak with certainty as to his brother's appearance, and of any peculiarity by which to distinguish him. Some remembered him well, and spoke of him as a tall, handsome youth, but wild and headstrong. Others of his being dull and obstinate; but all agreed about his love of wandering, his hatred of confinement, and his direct opposition to everything his father suggested for his good.

As nothing more definite could be obtained, and as he had experienced considerable difficulty in getting two accounts to correspond, he returned to London, instructed his solicitors to advertise in the country newspapers and offer a reward to anyone who would come forward either to prove his being alive or dead, to set inquiry afoot respecting any marriage he might have

contracted, and, above all, to ascertain if any heir existed (provided his brother had been married) who could come forward as his legal representative and lay claim to the property.

The more important, and, in his opinion, the more difficult task, he undertook himself; went off to seek out gipsies and their camps, and searching different parts of the country, made it his business to inquire of wandering tribes at fairs, at market towns, of wayside encampments and in solitary tents, but found insuperable obstacles beset him everywhere—pretended ignorance, a disinclination to talk of anything connected with themselves or their movements, a sullenness on being questioned, and a direct determination to put him off the scent in any matter having reference to their peculiar mode of life.

No one knew of him; no one had ever heard of a person such as he described, though such and such a tribe, if he could find it, might. Finding the same cold answer meet him at every turn respecting his brother, or of a gentleman's son having been known to join with gipsies, he abandoned his attempt in despair, and resolved to return to town and give up the hope of discovering him as utterly useless.

His agents had been equally unsuccessful.

No answers came to the advertisements. The offer of a reward met with no response; and, as a sufficient time had now elapsed for the claimant to appear if he existed, his lawyers set about taking the necessary steps to establish his title, leaving him at liberty to return to his father's house and seek repose after his fatiguing search.

He was sitting, as he said, one night, thinking of his brother, and in the very room in which his father had died, when the thought came over him that he would go into the green lanes in which the old man had seen his son asleep in the gipsy's tent, impelled by the strange hope that he might find the troop camping on the old spot, the fire burning, and the horses tethered as of old.

It was midnight, but that did not deter him; and, calling Angus to attend him, he set out on his apparently hopeless errand. The way was lonely, and as they went along through fields, through copses, and silent, solemn woods, the hare ran scared across their path, and the owl hooted from its hollow. The heavy mist fell blinding in their eyes, the hoar-frost lay white on bars and rails, the hedgerows glistened, and the moonlight struggled feebly through the clouds.

They walked some distance before they came to where the pathway through the wood emerged

upon the open road, and a low stile marked the boundary of the estate. They were close upon the turning now, which, according to the description of the locality given by the servants, led to the green lane in which he was induced to hope he might find the smoke-dried tents and the troop camping for the night. Once in that green lane the rest was easy. By following its windings he had been told he should come upon a piece of sward close to a bend in the road, and near the entrance of another lane branching to the right.

Slouching heavily along, and following over the damp green turf, Angus kept at his heels; and as they walked along shaded by the hedgerows and the overhanging trees, he could not help thinking of the time his father had walked that same green lane before, and when he had found his son herding with gipsies, and playing truant from his home.

His younger son now walked, if not with the same intention, yet impelled by as strange a hope, along that grass-grown lane; trusting, by some accident to find the gipsy troop returned, and the tents set up in the old haunt, now that his father was no more, and it might be supposed all inquiries would cease respecting the missing heir in consequence of his death.

But when he reached the bend in the road where the sward was broad and smooth, and where he had been told the gipsies formerly resorted, he found to his chagrin the place deserted. There was no ring of recent fire burnt into the turf, no scattered bones, no remnants and no rags; but all was cold and silent, solitary and dull! The dew lay heavy on the grass, the drooping trees hung down, and nothing appeared to stir beneath the leaden sky but their two selves walking slowly down the lane.

What was Angus looking at? There was barely light to see to pick up anything, for the moon was clouded, and during the short time they had been searching a white, thick haze had fallen, shutting out the view of the meadow land and the fields beyond the hedge.

Yet that he was looking at something was certain, for, walking in the middle of the lane, he stooped every now then, or followed it with his eyes bent on the ground, then stooped down again, and this time appeared to have found something, for he called to his master, and holding up a piece of rag and the bowl of a tobacco-pipe, said he had picked them up on the road.

Ellerton looked at them, but seeing nothing in a piece of rag and the bowl of a pipe to call

for special observation, he appeared to be losing patience, and inclined to give up further search, when Angus drawing him to the middle of the road, pointed to the track of wheels going down the lane, and the print of horses' hoofs stamped into the clay.

Ellerton saw nothing in these signs leading him to believe they afforded a trace of what he wished to find; but Angus thought differently, and said he would swear to a gipsy's cart-wheel, and a gipsy's horse-print anywhere; for the wheels never went straight, and the horse nearly always had a shoe off, or was shod with larger shoes than other horses, to prevent it sticking in the mud.

As his man appeared so confident, Ellerton let him have his way, but told him not to expect him to believe all he said of wheels and horse-shoes, or to wander far down the lane on a fool's errand, unless he had some surer evidence to go upon than a broken tobacco-pipe and a bit of rag.

Angus made no reply, but pointing to his feet marched on before, confident as an Indian on the track, and with a satisfied air, as much as to say, he knew what he was about better than his master, and understood more about gipsies and their ways than he could hope to know, for all his learning and his travels in foreign lands.

Crossing at right angles the lane they were walking in, ran another lane, covered with grass, and to all appearance but little used; when, tiring of his fruitless search, Ellerton called to his man and told him not to go any further, for he had quite made up his mind to abandon all hope of finding the gipsies, or the least trace of their encampment—at the very moment that he saw Angus turn into the cross lane, and keep on the way he was going, without seeming to care if he were right or wrong.

Impatient at his stupidity, and angry at his disobedience, Ellerton called to him and ordered him to return at once, to leave off swinging his long arms, and waste no further time upon a foolish errand. But Angus begged him to come on, said he knew he was on the right track, and that if his master would only have a little patience, he would come upon them after all; for the wheels had turned out of the old lane, and he was certain that the troop was not far off, but was most likely camping some little way ahead.

Had his man, then, surer instincts than his own, and a natural gift implanted in him by which to discover traces and judge by signs, when he, his master, could see nothing, and had failed to comprehend how out of little Angus

made so much? But he followed him for all that, and was soon rewarded by seeing something which, at an abrupt turn in the lane, led him to believe his man was right, or that his own eyesight was deceiving him.

Was it a fire, or the reflection of a fire, which at the further angle of the lane tinted the hedges, and threw a crimson haze across the sward? It *was* a fire. He saw it distinctly now—the discoloured tents, the carts drawn up, and the gipsies settled for the night.

And had he found them out at last?—discovered the identical troop his brother had been persuaded to join, and give up his home, his father, and his friends, to lead a gipsy life? Found, too, by Angus, that poor patient drudge, whom he had blamed for his stupidity, and in his superior wisdom thought to browbeat and call back, although he had said he was certain of the track, and knew the way a gipsy's cart-wheels ran, and how his horse was shod.

Was it possible that they could have heard of his father's death? Could they, that hunted and much-sought-for tribe, informed through unknown channels of his decease, have returned to their old camping ground, thinking to escape all questioning for the fault they had committed in luring away his son?

It was very like it; yet even presuming it was not the identical tribe of which he was in search, he trusted to learn something of its movements, and what had become of it; perhaps to gather some particulars relating to his brother, and in what quarter of the world he might expect to hear of him, provided he were alive.

After some time spent in whispering his servant what to do, and telling him not to show himself until he called to him, he led the way towards the watch-fire, and stepping lightly on the turf thought to steal upon the encampment before the sleepers became aware of his approach. But there were ears that listened to his almost noiseless tread, and eyes which, though they could not see so far into the darkness, yet turned in the direction by which he approached, and watched him as he stood at last full in the light thrown by the blazing fire.

The watcher by that fire was old and feeble: his hair hung about his brow in thin, though matted flakes, more resembling tow than hair, and of about the same colour. Yet though he sat so motionless and still, so bent and doubled by extreme old age, a gleam of the old intelligence and a spark of the old fire kindled in his eye when he saw Ellerton draw near, who in his turn watched that weird and wild old man

through the curling smoke, and looking first at him, then at it, could scarcely determine which was which, as he beheld that misty apparition staring at him through the flame, and squatting on its haunches.

The old man gazed at him with his filmy eyes, yet neither moved nor spoke; but, as though his whole existence depended on keeping the fire alight, he fed it with fresh fuel, and watched it burn without altering his position.

There was no sound stirring, and no perceptible movement made by anything. The very air was hushed, and though at times the sharp snap of burning wood gave out a hissing steam, it was not sufficient to disturb the silence, nor to call off attention from the heavy, almost profound calm that seemed to fall on everything, and wrap the earth in stillness and repose.

To stand there looking—he at the figure by the fire and the figure at him—was not what he came for; but, as it was necessary to say something to account for his intrusion, he pretended to have lost his way, and asked the gipsy if he had any objection to his sitting by the fire until daylight, when he hoped to find the road and resume his journey.

The old man raised his head, then looking at him earnestly, motioned him to do as he did

—sit beside the fire, or lie down if he liked it better.

There was a calmness in his manner, and a quiet though rude dignity in his gesture, leading Ellerton to imagine that he was the patriarch of the tribe, and used to being obeyed, not questioned, in what he chose to do. He therefore did as he was ordered, and then began to wonder why a man so old should be selected to attend to the fire and face the inclemency of the night, when younger members of the tribe were sheltered and asleep.

He did not question him on that head, but thought it better to let him have his way, and not disturb him more than was necessary. But as talking and not silence was what he wanted, he put a shilling in the old man's hand, hoping to draw him into conversation, and by that means find an opportunity to make some reference to his brother, of whom he thought the old gipsy must have heard, presuming he were a member of the tribe, and acquainted with its secrets.

The old man took the shilling, then, wrapping it in a piece of rag, he drew out a leather pouch, undid the rusty clasp, and put the shilling in. He then replaced the pouch somewhere between his skin and the shirt he was supposed to wear,

but neither thanked him for it, nor said a word one way or the other.

Would that old man speak if he gave him something more? or would he wonder why he gave it, and become suspicious as to his motive in offering it?

He knew a gipsy's love of money, and that he never refused it when offered. He also knew the suspicion they entertained of anyone intruding on their haunts, and that they invariably misled those who questioned them on their religion or mode of life—how they avoided speaking with anyone who pressed them closely on any particular head, more especially if, having picked up a smattering, a stranger ventured to address them in their own language.

The silent observation on the one part, and the rapt attention on the other, having continued longer than he desired, Ellerton inquired the name of the tribe to which the old man seemingly belonged, and if he were its patriarch, or simply watching in his turn to keep the fire alight while the others slept.

"It may be that I watch because I cannot sleep," replied the gipsy, "or, may be, am fit for nothing else, now I am old, and can't go out as I used to do, but must stay with the women folk, and boil the kettle for the young strong men

who kindly let me stay with them instead of leaving me to die in a ditch."

"Yet, judging by your looks, my friend, you must be strong and hearty still, and though you cannot get about as well as you used to do, you are able to work at your trade, and can assist the women in their wickerwares."

"What! work with worn-out bones like these?" cried the old man, holding up his fingers, and stretching them before him. "I should not know the withies if I felt them, and, God help me! could not bend them if I would. It wants some art to make our basketwork; eyes to see, and hands that's quick to move, not hooked like bits of iron, as my fingers is, with rheumatis and pains in the knuckles. My eyes are bad; I can't tell a roost cock from a hen, and as to catching—Lord help old Daniel!—he could no more come up with 'em than he could catch a fox, or see a blanket on a hedge, or a sheet slipped from its peg, as if on purpose to say, 'pick me up and put me in your pocket.'"

"But there are other things besides a farmer's roost cock or an old wife's sheet you get a living by. You are old, but not too old to tell fortunes, and that, I take it, pays you better than basket-work or tinkering."

"Ay, ay, but fortune-telling an't what it used

to be, nor children asked for as they was, though husbands is, and plenty of 'em to spare. But, somehow or other, things are different to what they was; husbands are hard to get, and children when they come, harder still to keep."

"You gipsies, as a rule, can't complain of that. I never saw a camp in all my life that hadn't a dozen children crawling outside the tents, or running about, looking well fed and hearty. But then, perhaps, they are not always your own children, but are lent to you to take charge of, to say nothing of a youngster who may have run away, perhaps, and joined your troop, leaving his father and the comforts of his home to lead a gipsy life."

"None as I ever heard on. He'd be a fool, I take it, as would leave a home for a tent, a bed for a blanket full of straw, or give over a chimney corner for a handful of coals and bits of wood as serves to make our fires with. He must be born and bred to it as would take to it of his own accord, whereas gipsies is gipsies, and used to it all their lives."

"Yet there's a tale told in these parts of a young man who went off once to join a troop like yours, and was never heard of afterwards, though his father tried hard to find him, and

would have given a deal of money to have got him back again."

"Money an't the gipsies' god," said the old man, with a sort of sneer upon his face, "though money got by sixpences comforts the old people as likes tea better nor broth. But for all that, money an't what he goes for as some does, though he knows its value, and gets it when he can. He has something better nor that to think of; he has his father's bones to care for, and his father's father gone before to teach him wisdom and make him hold his tongue."

Turning his dim, filmy eyes as he said this full on Ellerton, he looked at him for awhile, then dropped them on the ground; he next scraped up a fresh supply of fuel, and, gathering it bit by bit, placed it on the fire, then hobbled off as if in search for more.

Ellerton had approached the subject cautiously, and, without naming his brother, had hinted at the possibility of such an event as a gentleman's son having joined a gipsy crew. Yet, despite his caution, he thought he detected a curious expression come over the old man's face—blank as it appeared to be, and wrinkled like a piece of worn-out parchment—when he alluded to it, which struck him with the notion that he had discovered the reason of his visit, and that his seek-

ing him in the green lanes was with a different motive to the one he had mentioned.

Busy in his search for sticks, twigs, ends of branches, or dried roots, the old man went wandering up and down the hedge, but after awhile returned, tottering and stooping as before. Setting down his bundle, and resuming his old place, he threw a handful of sticks on the fire, and became extinguished in a cloud of smoke.

As he evidently preferred the smoky to the clear side, Ellerton had nothing to urge to the contrary, though he lost sight of his companion by it. But by the time the twigs began to blaze, and the flames to shoot, he saw the gipsy once again, and, drawing nearer to his side of the fire, watched the effect the glare produced on the surrounding space.

Each blade of grass was now distinct, each nook tinted by the fire, the black and dingy tents were covered by a ruddy hue, and the sleepers in them partially revealed, yet so disposed, that the very rudeness of the scene became invested with a picturesqueness such as he had seldom witnessed.

Bending over the fire until his face appeared to be in dangerous contact with the flame, the old man sat, yet did not seem to feel the heat, nor suffer from the choking fume emitted by the

wood, though it almost stifled Ellerton. His dark brown face, withered like an ape's, and his dim eyes turned upon the glare, he sat stolid as usual, as quiet in his manner, and as determinately obstinate in his silence as before.

Was that look indicative of a want of intellect, or the effect of cunning, and a well-trained assumption of pretended ignorance? It was one of these, and Ellerton was rather inclined to think that cunning, and not incapacity, had to answer for that listless stare—that vacant look and pretended indifference to the presence of a stranger. Whichever it might be, he was satisfied of one thing; that that gipsy could clear up all his doubts, explain his brother's absence, and account for his movements from the time of his leaving his father's house to the latest moments of his life—if he only chose to be communicative and would explain what he knew.

The thing was to tempt him to talk—to lead him on from point to point, and make him tell his gipsy secrets.

He thought he would try.

"And what may be your age, my friend?" said Ellerton, perceiving by the old man's manner there was no chance of his beginning.

"Over eighty, and not many more years to live, with eyes nigh gone, and limbs gone too."

"And how old may be your wife?"

"She would be past eighty too, had the Lord spared her! But she's been dead—ah! more than twenty year, and lies buried out in Yorkshire."

"You speak of the Lord. You know of His teaching and His goodness then?"

"Oh! yes! I have heerd of it from some of those gentlemen in black coats as preach to us on Sundays on a common, or at fair time, when we goes to listen to 'em. It's very good of 'em, no doubt, though what they says I don't quite understand."

"But, then, they read to you?"

"Sometimes. One of them did very kindly when poor Nan was taken bad, and good it seemed to do her. But she died, poor soul! Yet talked of being saved, and of the little kinchin dead a year or two before."

"And that poor child, you hope, is to be saved as well—to join Nan up in the skies; and when you go there too, you trust to meet your dead child, don't you, as well as Nan?"

"It's what I try to think; but somehow or other the reading gets the better of me, and I know no more how to spell them tracts the ladies give us than a cow can leap a five-barred gate."

"But they will come and read to you, and

make you understand that a gipsy can be saved as well as another, if he will only do what he is told and make a clean breast of his past offences."

"And what 'ud be the good of that? Can't they understand without my tellin' that gipsies can't starve no more nor other folk? That beef an' mutton ain't to be got for nothin'; whereas small matters is, an' the bones got rid of, or not to be sworn to, even if they're found. That's what makin' a clean breast of it would be; and if so be they had happened to lose a fowl or two, or a lamb mayhap, I'd like to know how they'd use us kindly then?"

"But fowls, or anything you chanced to steal, would not be the whole of what you had to tell, if you had only a mind. Mr. Ellerton would not have brought you to account for trifles. He would have forgiven all offences in the way of petty thefts had you dealt fairly by him in other matters."

"It's come to his turn now, it seems, and gipsies ain't the only ones as die," said the old man, evading a more direct reply.

"'And now he is dead you have come back to your old quarters. You have been a long time absent."

"Forty year nor more."

"Why have you kept so long away?"

"You must ask my boys and the young strong men. They go where they like, and light their fires where they like. It's not an old man like me they mind, nor my tellin' 'em what to do."

"How comes it you are not camping in the old spot?"

"What—in the green lane yonder? Oh, why—the horse was tired, and couldn't get so far."

"You came further to get here. Your horse, I suppose, was not the old horse, and so it lost its way; or perhaps your cart could not be stopped, but trundled on into this cross bye-road instead."

There was a pause at this, during which the old man looked doggedly at the fire, and Ellerton was almost sorry he had been tempted to tell him as much as he had. It was evident by the old man's manner that he had discovered he had a motive in his visit, and that his talk of having lost his way was invented to put him off his guard, and entrap him to speak about the disappearance of the younger Ellerton.

He had gone too far to attempt dissimulation now, and as he felt convinced by the gipsy's knowledge of the locality of the old camping

ground, and his acquaintance with the time elapsed since the troop had been there last, that he must be a member of the same tribe who had lured away his brother, he thought, by pressing closely, to induce the old man to confess his share in it, and inform him of what he wished to know.

"You have heard of Mr. Ellerton's death, and therefore come again to your old quarters; yet not to that particular spot where he saw his son sleeping in your tents. Is that son dead too? or is he alive and coming to take possession of his father's land—to [illegible] the gipsy free of his house, and give him [illegible] of his estate? He ought to do someth[illegible] out of [illegible]le, and to show that I [illegible]orgott[illegible] man's k[illegible] in [illegible]marry some[illegible]

Th[illegible]ed [illegible]his [illegible] his g[illegible]im, [illegible]n and a[illegible] ref[illegible] to "r[illegible] brea[illegible] gested[illegible] tong[illegible] till he[illegible]

"Y[illegible]ing [illegible] Ellerto[illegible]he o[illegible] the pa[illegible] co[illegible] you ha[illegible] me truly[illegible]

or some other of your tribe, enticed him from his home to join your camp and live with you, now more than forty years ago."

Then seeing that the gipsy still hung back, and bent his wrinkled face towards the flame, he added—"How would you like a son of yours to go away and never let you know what he did, or where he went?"

The old man still stared on—he shook his head, but made no answer.

"Or if that young child you said its mother hoped to meet, and you desire to meet as well—suppose it had been stolen, and no one would tell you if it lived or died? wouldn't you think it cruel and unjust?"

"Perhaps. But I promised, and he would have his way. Gipsies ain't like other folk. They never tell their secrets, nor talk of what they know. Yet now he is dead——"

"Dead! is Arthur dead?"

The old man glanced about—looked cautiously towards the tents—then drawing close to Ellerton he whispered in his ear:

"Dead, and lies buried out in Yorkshire, side by side with poor old Nan. I saw him dropped into the hole, and helped to cover him with the clay! And there poor Reuben lies—or Arthur, as you call him—who, if I meet him overhead, I

hope will not be angry with the poor old gipsy for tellin' what he knows."

A silence followed on the words. The gipsy gazing restlessly towards the tents, and Ellerton reflecting on what he had heard.

Suddenly interrogating the old man, he asked —"Did he ever marry?"

"Not as I know of. He was wild and headstrong, and could never be got to make up his mind to anything, but would go away for months, and come back once in a year or so to see if the old man lived and if old Nan was living too. It was not that he was bad-hearted or went off willingly, but somehow or other he could not help it, as he said, and could no more be got to stay in one place than he could be brought to strip a hedge—as is natural to gipsies—or help to fill the pot from the farmyards, so that the young men did not like it, and trouble enough I had to keep them friends and not fall out a-fighting."

"And never married?"

"Never—but lies buried where the gipsies bore him on their shoulders in a village churchyard close on the border, and should you ever go there, you'll find a piece of board stuck up for his headstone, and a R and a C—I cut in it with my knife—to stand for Reuben Craddock,

which was the name he went by when with us. Both in a year! Both called to go! Nan dead of smallpox and Reuben of a fever."

Ellerton had obtained sufficient for all reasonable purposes; and having noted down the name of the village, and the particulars relating to the head-board and the letters cut in it, he thought it time to go. Morning was breaking, and as some of the sleepers in the tents might wake and wonder what he did there, sitting by their fire and talking with their Patriarch, he thanked the old man for his information, and putting a sovereign in his hand promised to be a friend to him at any time he required one and would let him know in what way he could be of service to him.

The old gipsy's eye brightened at the sight of gold, and carefully wrapping it in another piece of rag he placed it inside his dress, and in the same quarter in which he had deposited the shilling. This process over, Ellerton took leave of the old man, and walking a few paces off looked about for Angus, expecting to find him lurking behind the shadow of a tent, or somewhere in the background according to the directions he had given, which were, that he should keep out of sight and not show himself, for fear the old man might grow suspicious and refuse to

give any information in the presence of a witness.

He looked and looked, but seeing nothing of him he came to the conclusion that, most probably, he had returned into the lane to wait for him, or had gone further off than he intended. Anyway he was not in sight, and Ellerton cautiously moved away from the neighbourhood of the fire, and stepping lightly on the sward passed by the tents with as little noise as possible.

Although wishing to avoid being heard by any of the sleepers, he could not help peeping, as he passed, through the coverings of the tents, and seeing the inmates buried in deep sleep, reflected on the peaceful life they seemed to lead, and the sound sleep they enjoyed, as contrasted with that of their betters. He had already passed the cluster of tents contiguous to the fire, and was about moving more rapidly, when he saw another tent set up a short distance from the rest and standing like an outpost over them, but not so far away from the fire as to lose its light, though it received none of its warmth.

Passing on tiptoe, and observing that the cloth thrown over its entrance was wider apart than usual, he had the curiosity to pause and look inside, but almost started as he saw, to his astonishment, his servant Angus lying fast asleep along-

side another man, whose straw he had evidently encroached upon, and whose blanket he had in part appropriated.

There was no mistaking his black head, nor the heavy sleeping face, for the firelight fell directly on it; though how he could have crawled in there without waking the man was a mystery; and out of patience at his disobedience and laziness, Ellerton touched him smartly with his stick, then strode away and beckoned him to follow.

Waked out of a sound sleep, and startled at seeing his master, Angus began to rub his eyes and then to move away, leaving his companion apparently fast asleep, and covered over by the larger portion of the blanket. Once out of the tent he began to stretch and yawn, and look as though he would rather have kept where he was; but on seeing his master beckon, he shook himself together and shambled off towards him.

On first looking to make sure that Angus had not fallen asleep again, but was ready to follow him, Ellerton had noticed that the old gipsy was still sitting before the fire, and holding his head so close to it he was afraid he would fall into it and be smothered; but on his looking a second time, he missed the old man, and though he looked and looked, saw nothing of him, and began to wonder what had become of him.

Angus was close upon him now, and excusing

his bad conduct, begged to be forgiven; but Ellerton cut him short, ordered him to go before as he appeared to know the road the best, and keep along the lane.

They were close upon the angle of the lane whence he had first observed the fire, when, curious to know what had become of the old man, he turned about, and saw his stooping figure a little distance off, close under a hedge, and searching about as if for sticks or odd matters to serve him for fuel.

He saw him distinctly now; the fire shone on his white head, and his bent figure was clearly to be seen. But what, or who was that, he saw creep out of the tent Angus had been sleeping in? Was it a man or a dog that on all fours appeared to creep and crawl towards the hedge and the dry ditch in which the old gipsy still kept searching up and down?

He could not stay to see. It was plainly something alive, but whether a man or an animal he could not make out, and so he left it; followed his servant into the green lane, and, as he passed along, began to wonder at the strangeness of the coincidence, that he should have seen Angus, as his father had seen his son, sleeping near that very spot, and in a gipsy's tent, and with as much comfort as if he had been born in one.

CHAPTER XII.

BREAKING THE ICE.

THE narrative brought to a close, Mrs. Rushbrook expressed herself much obliged, and even Margaret began to look upon Mr. Ellerton more favourably, in consideration of the anxiety he had shown to discover his brother, and the persevering search he had instituted to find out what had become of him. Of his death he assured them he had found unmistakable evidence, not only by discovering the identical churchyard in which he was buried, but the rotted head-board, with the letters R and C rudely cut into it by a knife, as mentioned by the old gipsy.

Having satisfied himself, as he told them, that thus much of the old man's story was true, he next inspected the Church Register, and, tracing back to about the time the gipsy said his wife had died, found an entry no doubt having reference to his brother, and sufficient to establish the date of his death, though it failed to set forth his proper name.

The entry ran "August 1st, 1814. Buried, Reuben Craddock, a Gipsy."

That this same Reuben Craddock was his brother he had now no doubt. The old man could not have recounted the particulars of his death and burial without some foundation to go upon, neither could he have had the parts so well arranged (presuming he wished to cheat him) as to enter into so full an explanation of why he came to be buried in that particular spot, when any other place would have answered his purpose, and put him off his guard.

He had no fear now of after heirs, nor of a son of that brother to come upon his land and claim it as his birthright. He was master now! He was the undoubted inheritor of his father's property, and desired only, as he had said, a partner in his happiness, and a tender wife to make his joy complete.

His second visit ended with these very words; but during the evening his attentions to Margaret had been so marked, it was easy to discover the wife he had set his heart upon, and removed all doubts as to his choice, if she would only accept him.

But Margaret, how was she disposed? Was she willing to become his wife, or was she still in doubt whether to reject him, or wait an answer to her letter; act upon that, and say Yes or No, as she found her lover true or false?

No letter came next day. But the day after she felt certain Frederick would be there himself, to answer for himself, and set her doubts at rest. Let him but do that, and show his love by his desire to possess her, and Ellerton might seek some other bride, and dower her with the wealth of all the world; she would see her mistress of it without a sigh, so that she could still be certain of a life of love with him who first had won her and deserved her love.

She watched the postman down the street on the following day; watched him till he was out of sight, yet never gave over thinking he would return and bring her lover's letter. But when she saw him pass their door without even looking at it, her heart felt well nigh bursting to think how she had watched and waited in hopes Frederick would write to her, and yet had never heard from him.

Angered, and yet more pained at the bare suggestion of his slighting her, she determined patiently to wait another day. Another day might set her doubts at rest, and explain the reason of his silence. But should that morrow come, and his answer not come with it, adieu to hope! Frederick was lost! Ellerton was to come again that very day, and, as she felt, with the intention of proposing to her.

Long before post-time she was up and dressed, and watching from the window. Her mother called, her sister tried to persuade her to come down, but in vain. Indifferent to their attempts to rouse her, she sat as though her whole existence depended on her remaining there, and that life or death was soon to follow, so eagerly she looked out, in hopes of receiving a reply.

She saw the postman! Saw him pass from door to door, and stop at last at theirs! then, flying down the stairs, thought to find the long-expected letter! There was none. None, at least, for her, but two for her mother, who had never expected any, and could have waited with the greatest ease, whilst she was burning with impatience, and longed to know the secret of her future life.

One of the letters was from Mr. Blissett, enclosing a receipt in full on behalf of her father's creditors, and congratulating her mother on the happy change in her affairs. The other was from her great-aunt. A long and most instructive letter, written on three sides of letter paper, and crossed and re-crossed under the foldings to save double postage.

The letter was in her usual style, and breathed a spirit of the most perfect goodness, intermixed with violent abuse of everything she did not

quite agree with. Her love of her dear self, mixed up with scraps of sermons and worn-out sentiments to spread the sheet, Mrs. Rushbrook had hardly patience to read it through, when she came upon the startling intelligence that Priscilla had at last consented to bestow her mature affections upon Captain Nubbleton, to whom she hoped shortly to be married.

Mrs. Rushbrook was astonished. She was so confounded by the news, and so indignant at her aunt's absurdity—to say nothing of the injury she was about to inflict upon her family by robbing them of their just expectations by marrying when she was old enough to know better. She hadn't a word to say, but handed the letter to Margaret with a look of lofty scorn, then turned to the lawyer's letter once again, saying that in that indeed "breathed the spirit of a true Christian," since he spoke in the most enthusiastic terms of Mr. Ellerton, who had paid his dear friend's debt, and in conclusion begged to be permitted an opportunity to make his family acquainted with *her* family, so that they might not only be neighbours, but dear friends.

Margaret read that letter first; dwelt on the generous kindness of Mark Ellerton, and contrasted his unceasing efforts to ingratiate himself in her affections with the indifference shown by

her accepted lover. And would she then endure his slight and his neglect, after beseeching him to write, and submit tamely to be slighted as if she had no one else in the world to care for her?

Let him seek fame and fortune singly now, and win some other bride. She was not worthy of a reply, so let him lose her and begone.

Her great-aunt's letter was next read, and laughed at with affected merriment. But could that aching heart have explained its sorrow, sobs had choked her laughter, and tears, the bitterest tears that woman ever shed, have filled her eyes! Pride, anger, love, all fighting in her breast, and regret more strong than either when she thought how she had been deceived where she had looked for truth.

Her great-aunt's letter was important in more senses than one, since it entirely removed the hopes of her mother benefiting by her fortune, and contained the news of the havoc the Captain had made in her susceptible heart. She was prepared for this, and had half expected to hear of it before. But the letter was so jumbled and confused, it was a relief to have to make it out, and turn from one reference to another, from fold to fold, from pages 1 and 2 to 3 and 4, until she discovered a small P.S. in a corner of the letter, stating that her great-aunt intended to come to

London shortly to make a settlement on the Captain, when she would take the opportunity to introduce her intended to her niece and family.

And had that icy vestal consented to be blessed? Had she, who had always preached against the vanity of earthly joys, so soon cast off the mask, rushed in for their enjoyment, and professed her readiness to endure the assaults of Hymen at her time of life at the solicitation of the equally worn-out Nubbleton?

Had it pleased fortune that Frederick and herself had been united, or could she entertain the hope that she might still be his, then indeed a loving pair might have been seen, fitted to attract and charm the eyes of lovers like themselves. All that was over now. There was no hope! but like a summer leaf the promise of her life had faded, and instead of light and sunshine, the darkling figure of that stranger came to fill the vacant space up by her side, and make her tremble at his presence. Her girlish pictures of delight suddenly drawn aside to leave a gloomy vision there instead, a cold uncertain wavering for her old substantial joy.

Thus, though she held the letter in her hand and fixed her eyes on it, she saw nothing! Her thoughts were on her lover, and out with him in his pleasant home, still tracing in her mind the

fields beyond the hedge, and the paths where she had wandered up and down with him! And so she dreamt her dream of joy and love again, and of the happy time when they should meet to part no more, till her eyes swam with tears and her waking senses came to tell her that her dream was over.

Her mother watched her pale and downcast look, and thinking of the time when she was like her daughter, young, and tenderly attached to one who was everything to her, though disliked by others, became uneasy. Had anyone then said to her, "Give up that man, abandon him and marry some one else," would she have given him up? and would she not have proclaimed against the cruelty and injustice of such a request?

She had thought to advance her daughter's interest by uniting her to Ellerton, and at the same time hoped perhaps to secure some advantage to herself. But since that could not be, except by destroying her child's peace, why let it go! and let Margaret marry whom she pleased. It was better than having to reflect she should be answerable for her daughter's misery, and accountable for all that followed, should her union with him turn out badly.

Trembling in the balance the future good or ill of both their lives depended. A few moments

would have decided. The words of tenderness were on her lips, when an unlooked-for interruption left the good to rise, and the ill to fall by its superior weight.

The interruption was occasioned by the announcement of a visitor, and that visitor no other than Mrs. Blissett—a lady tolerably good looking, rather plump, and of exceedingly amiable expression. Her years sat so lightly on her that whether she was thirty-five or forty-five it would have been difficult to determine, for she still retained the contour of a handsome figure, despite the matronly proportions she had acquired since the time her husband led her, a slim and remarkably pretty girl, to the altar.

She was fresh coloured and kindly looking; had an air of satisfied content about her, and a melting softness in her eyes, peculiar to people who at first sight may be said to be exceedingly good tempered, and easily pleased with anything they see.

She came bustling into the room with the air of a person accustomed to be welcomed and made much of; and Mrs. Rushbrook was slightly puzzled what to make of her; whether to receive her advances stiffly, or accept her on her own terms. But as Mrs Blissett held out her hand, and shaking hers with all the warmth

of an old friendship, said she was delighted to see her—Mrs. Rushbrook had no choice but to say she was delighted too, though she did not look delighted, but was obliged to say she was for the sake of appearances.

If the truth must be told, she was a little—just a little—put out. But this was only for a moment, for Mrs. Blissett would not let her be put out. Her good humour was so catching, her face so bright and pleasant, that Mrs. Rushbrook tried her best at looking pleasant too; glanced a little uneasily towards Margaret, but perceiving no particular change in her, she sat opposite her visitor, and really appeared to be, as she professed herself to be, delighted to see her.

"I promised my husband," said Mrs. Blissett, "I would call and try and persuade you into a liking for us, so that we might not only be neighbours but near friends, and able to run in and see one another whenever we liked without any fuss. Now you and your girls, and I and my girls, have lived within a hundred yards of one another for goodness knows how long; and like true neighbours, we know no more of one another than if we were a hundred miles apart! And so we might have remained till doomsday, I looking at you, you looking at me,

and our daughters severely critical on each others' dresses—had not my husband, by the merest chance, he says, made your acquaintance and given me the opportunity of calling on you."

"We are greatly indebted, I am sure," said Mrs. Rushbrook, "and since you have heard the full extent of our calamity from Mr. Blissett——"

"I have heard nothing—positively not a word. Though had I been a jealous woman, I should have had a fit of hysterics at hearing what he said of you. And as to your daughters, I don't think they are safe in the same street with him! Not that I fancy he will have much chance—with one of them at least—who I hope soon to congratulate on having entered into a most desirable engagement."

Margaret felt to whom their visitor alluded, and, though she pretended ignorance of what her husband had no doubt informed her, she let that little fact creep out, to show she knew enough to make her mistress of the situation, and let them see that she was competent to give an opinion upon so interesting a subject as her anticipated marriage with Mr. Ellerton.

"But where is your younger daughter, my dear madam?" said Mrs. Blissett. "But I

shall see her soon, you may be sure of that, now that I have 'broken the ice,' as my husband wished me to do, and called on you. What with your girls and my girls, and my son Leonard (who will be overjoyed I am sure to hear of the success of my visit), we shall look forward to the long winter nights as the most pleasant of the whole year, and will do our best to make them pass away in a round of innocent amusement."

Bertha had come down stairs, and was about entering the room at the moment the last few words were spoken; but at the mention of Mr. Leonard Blissett—who was to be so "overjoyed" at meeting them—she crept away as softly as she came, then flying upstairs, never said a word to anyone of what she had heard, though perhaps she thought the more, and felt he *would* be overjoyed to see her.

"Since you particularly wish it," said Mrs. Rushbrook, "we shall, of course, be equally gratified in forming so very pleasing an acquaintance. But my daughters have been so much at home, and so carefully educated, I doubt if they would wish to share in the pleasures you speak of, or care for the amusements you are kind enough to offer."

"Not care for pleasure! Well, all I can say

is, if education has taught them that, they must be very unlike other girls, who, as a rule, are quite as fond of amusement as their mothers were before them. Now, my opinion is, that pleasure, taken moderately, of course, is good for man, woman, and child. Pleasure makes us contented with our lot. To that we all owe our best feelings and our brightest thoughts; at least, I know I always used to think so, and, to say the truth, I can't quite give up my old propensities now I have a grown man for a son, and a couple of daughters as old, if not older, than yours."

"But then your opportunities for indulging in amusements were doubtless greater than mine. As the daughter of a Dissenting minister, I was cautioned against all worldly vanities, and——"

"And ran after them all the more eagerly because you were told not, I have no doubt. But that is nothing. *You* are not a Dissenting minister, at all events; and now you have smart daughters to lead the dance, you must be content to be a looker on, and enjoy the pleasure of seeing their happiness. Mothers must be content to be lookers on, you know, and to give up something to their girls until their turn comes round to fill up corners, and make room for their children, as we make room for ours."

"I hope you do not think me so selfish as to

be envious of their youth. I do not think I can be blamed for that, though I sometimes fear I am for the sacrifices I make, and for having too great an anxiety for their welfare. It is not for ourselves, dear madam, we sometimes do a violence to our feelings, but for those whose happiness we have at heart, and whose inexperience it becomes us, as their mothers, to govern and direct."

Having delivered herself of this harangue, Mrs. Rushbrook looked about for a general expression of approval. But as Margaret's eyes were bent upon the ground, and Mrs. Blissett kept hers fixed on Margaret, Mrs. Rushbrook felt herself slighted and ill-used, though she made up her mind to endure it patiently, to show her visitor she was accustomed to make sacrifices, and with what a Christian spirit she took all the suffering on herself.

It was quite evident to Mrs. Blissett that the mother and daughter entertained different opinions, not only as to the extent of the sacrifice so feelingly dwelt upon by Mrs. Rushbrook, but as to what happiness was supposed to consist of. But as she could not venture to interfere in so delicate a question, she contented herself by looking earnestly at Margaret, and, naturally enough, supposed that Mrs. Rushbrook's sacrifice meant Margaret's sacrifice, and that the mother

and the daughter could not quite agree as to the extent to which it was to be made, or who should make it.

But all this had nothing to do with the object of her visit, which was, to prevail upon the widow to pass an evening at her house, and bring her daughters with her, so that the two families might have the happiness of meeting and forming a friendship agreeable to both parties.

Mrs. Rushbrook tried to excuse herself, but Mrs. Blissett would take no denial, and on the former saying "it was quite impossible for her to indulge in gaiety, or even to be seen abroad in company so soon after her husband's death," Mrs. Blissett had her answer ready.

"I would not for all the world propose anything of the kind. Gaiety is, of course, quite out of the question; but surely there would be nothing improper in your passing an hour or two at a friend's house at a time when you are not able to receive friends at home. Besides, these poor girls of yours require a little change. So, my dear madam, make up your mind and come. I am sure you cannot object when you know the pleasure it will afford my husband and my daughters, to say nothing of my son, who longs to be permitted the opportunity of being introduced to you."

On the express understanding that no one but the members of the two families were to be present, Mrs. Rushbrook consented, after a little further pressing, to her neighbour's wish, and agreed to pass the following evening with them. But as, she said, she feared she might be nervous, or not able to face company, then at all events she promised that her daughters should go for an hour or two if she could not; Mrs. Blissett, on her part, undertaking to send them home at ten o'clock, the hour at which Mrs. Rushbrook said they always went to bed.

Glad to have succeeded in what her husband wished her to do, Mrs. Blissett took her leave, said she should fully expect them, and declared that if Mrs. Rushbrook did not go she should come and fetch her, for she knew her husband longed to say something particularly agreeable to her, and had a thousand things to talk about, which could not be properly spoken, except in her presence, and in the presence of the united families.

CHAPTER XIII.

MRS. RUSHBROOK'S LETTER.

"My dear Aunt,—I write in great excitement, and fear I shall not be able to express myself correctly, so suddenly has a great good been vouchsafed by the mercy of the Lord to His unworthy servant, who was lately given up to grief, and rendered prostrate by her sad bereavement.

"I thought it might be brought about in time, but not so quickly as it has been; and when last night my dear departed husband's friend came according to his promise (and, as I fancied, prepared to propose for Margaret) I felt so nervous and uneasy, I scarcely knew what I was about—she had conducted herself so strangely all the day, first leading me to think she had made up her mind to accept him, and then again making me fancy she was obstinately determined to cling to that young man of whose infamous behaviour you wrote some time ago.

"I am satisfied that Margaret read your letter, for she has been a different girl ever since, and appears to take his conduct dreadfully to heart. So much so, that I grew uneasy at last, and thought

of begging her to do as she pleased, and relieve me of all anxiety about her, and, but for the accidental visit of a friend, I should, no doubt, have sacrificed my darling child to a most miserable future, and seen her married to that good-for-nothing fellow, instead of to the rich and noble Mr. Ellerton.

"Yes, aunt, Margaret is engaged to him. She has accepted him, and I have been crying all night with thinking of her happiness, and the splendid prospect she has before her. Her poor dear father's wish has been complied with, and, I need not say, that the thoughts of Robert struck heavily upon me until, worn out by crying, I fell asleep and did not wake till morning.

"As you will, no doubt, be anxious to know all about it, I will explain particulars, which I am sure will make you as happy as this unlooked for event has made me.

"Mr. Ellerton, I think I told you, was to call, and I spoke of my being nervous for fear Margaret should refuse him. But when I saw her come down with her eyes as bright as diamonds (though a little red, I thought), and dressed with particular care, I saw a change had come upon her, and that Mr. Ellerton, should he make an offer, was likely to be accepted.

"He was unusually backward, and evidently

nervous, at first; but when he found that she let him keep her hand, and smiled a little when he complimented her on her charming looks, he positively trembled with excitement; then, fixing his eyes on her, looked as if he would read her soul and dive into her thoughts.

"You may easily imagine what I, as her mother, felt at this momentous crisis of her life! It positively unfitted me for company; so thinking to compose myself a little, and give the young people—(not that Mr. Ellerton is young; he is not, for he is forty), an opportunity to talk by themselves—I went upstairs to take a little sal-volatile; and feeling faint, was obliged to throw open the window, and sit at it for quite a quarter of an hour, before I recovered myself. Bertha was upstairs as well; not, I am happy to say, indisposed as I was; but when I left the room, I beckoned her to come with me, for I really felt so faint, I thought I should spill the sal-volatile in pouring it out.

"The good dear girl behaved herself most properly, and never left me until I thought it might seem odd if I remained away longer; when feeling myself considerably better, I returned into the sitting-room just in time to see Mr. Ellerton rise from his knee, and, utterly forgetful of my presence, kiss Margaret! heard him say a

thousand tender things, and call himself the happiest of men, just as poor Robert did when I accepted him.

"Margaret was pale as death: all but her cheek-bones, which had two bright patches on them as big as shillings. But as she kept her eyes down, I could not see if she was crying, though I *think* she was *not*, although, of course, considerably overcome, and bashful in the presence of her lover; when placing a magnificent diamond ring on her engaged finger—which of course he must have had ready in his pocket—Mr. Ellerton stood looking at her, charmed out of his senses by her beauty, and overcome by her amiability.

"'Yes, my dear mamma,' he said (it sounded rather odd, I own, to be called mamma, for I am slightly the younger of the two) 'Margaret has consented to my bliss; she has promised to try and love me, and if a life of devotion, and a constant desire to make her happy, will secure that love, I shall be more than satisfied, and more than recompensed for anything I can do to contribute to her peace.'

"All this, my dear aunt, you will confess was very kind and generous on his part, but I don't think Robert would have liked it had I been so indifferent when he spoke of his happiness as

Margaret appeared to be when Mr. Ellerton spoke of his. She seemed to be more like a person waiting for a coffin, instead of for the beautiful dresses he had begged her to accept, and which he said he should select for her approval, so that she might please her fancy, and do as she pleased with them.

"I don't know what she said—it was little enough—but as it appeared to satisfy him, I did not interfere, but thought it better to express myself delighted (as of course I was), and say how pleased I should be to have him for my son (how odd!) And so the evening passed away in pleasant talk, until the footsteps in the street grew seldom, and nothing but a heavy pacing up and down could be heard, which dear Mark said was his 'dog' waiting for him.

"At length, and when the time came to say good-bye, Mr. Ellerton declared his generous intention to make a settlement on Margaret (how kind!), and that he should get Mr. Blissett (Mrs. Blissett was the friend I mentioned who had called) to prepare the papers, so that on the wedding day everything might be arranged, and Margaret have a handsome independence settled on her for life.

"I don't know what Margaret was thinking of, but she certainly became uncommonly agree-

able at the mention of the settlement; and did not pass it over so lightly as she had done the other matters. She was doubtless impressed by his generosity, and thought, perhaps, she should be able to benefit her sister (I will not say myself) out of what he placed at her disposal, when Mr. Ellerton rose to go; kissed me, kissed Bertha, and then kissed Margaret again; spoke of the happy time to come, when the marriage could with propriety take place, then whistling to his 'dog' took an affectionate leave of us, and went away looking as happy as a king.

"I am sure, dear aunt, you will be pleased to hear of this agreeable change in our affairs; and as my son-in-law is rich and liberal, I have no doubt we shall benefit by his kindness, and be able to relieve our relations of any apprehensions they may entertain on our account, or from distressing themselves about our future welfare.

"I had almost forgotten to mention one thing which I should by right have stated at first, when I told you of my inability to sleep for over-joy, and that was, that I was partly kept awake by Margaret's sobs, who, poor girl, was sleepless like myself, and evidently overcome by the novelty of her position, not, as I at first supposed, with thinking of that graceless scamp young [illegible]-wright, of whom, should you hear anything

further, please inform me in your next. I can positively write no more, for my paper is full, so will conclude by signing myself

"Your dutiful and affectionate niece,

"SUSAN RUSHBROOK.

"P.S.—We shall, of course, be glad to see you when you come to town to make a settlement on Captain Nubbleton."

Never did P.S. occupy a smaller space, and never did a woman compress her thoughts into a narrower compass, or say as much in so few words. The Captain was dismissed in that brief sentence, her aunt was sneered at and defied as well, and "her property" passed over in silence. Priscilla held up her hands when she read the letter, and wondered at the ingratitude of her brother's daughter, who, from first to last, had set her authority at defiance, and treated her as if she had been a mere nobody.

That Miss Hindmarsh might have reddened, and then turned pale, the least instructed in that lady's character may readily admit, and take for granted that the Captain was more graciously received than ever, when on halting at the little garden gate, he thrust his cane between the rails, and playfully made known the goodness of his aim by knocking down a flower-pot, then, strut-

ting loftily to the window, discovered the melting spinster overcome by his personal charms, though slightly glowing still, and cogitating how to be revenged on her undutiful niece.

A Captain was Caaptain, and able to take his wife to Court—at least he said so—whereas her niece's daughter's husband as was to be, was simply a fortunate clown, whose father, sprung from nothing, had wrung his gold like blood-drops from his poor toiling negroes. Her sainted brothers, black and ill-used pets, come at last to feel their independence, and, of course, to benefit by the change made in their favour.

Had they fired his plantations, and with true negro savagery utterly destroyed everything he possessed, it had been but a proper act of vengeance. Had they done this, or could it even now be done, Priscilla would have recognised in it a just and proper retribution on the head of that purse-proud stranger, through whose wealth her niece thought to be enriched, and able to turn up her nose at her, whose freeholds and whose Consols had hitherto set her at an enviable distance, humbly to be approached, and regarded with a distant longing for her worldly means.

Had the Captain but declared an equal longing at that particular moment, and stood out for the Consols as well as the houses, Priscilla had turned

them over to him at once, if he, on his part, would only have promised to be faithful to her, and not indulge in military excesses—such as she had heard of, and determined never to allow in a husband she had bought at the full market value, or even beyond it, when his rheumatism and the loss of three fingers were taken into account.

Now, these very Consols, and these said freeholds, had formed the ground of their original disagreement. The Captain demanding unconditional surrender of everything she possessed, and Priscilla bent on keeping everything for herself. Hence the quarrel, and hence it was that Miss Hindmarsh had bid fair to lose her only chance of being married, when she heard it reported that the scandal-mongers of the town had made a little free with her reputation, and had assigned other reasons for the coolness between the Captain and herself, than a disagreement about money matters.

She had also heard (and the mutual friend at whose house they had met had told her so herself) that Captain Nubbleton had at once come to her rescue, and, taking the whole blame on himself, had challenged the principal grocer in the town for daring to spread a report so injurious to her character. A course of settlement the grocer by no means approved, but which had the effect

of placing Miss Hindmarsh in such enviable notoriety, that she melted as suddenly as she had frozen, and professed her readiness to forgive her Captain if he would only subdue his ardour, and not go forth to mortal combat with a man big enough to eat him.

To prove his magnanimity, and not to be outdone in generosity, the Captain consented to accept the truce, and meeting upon neutral ground in the front parlour of their mutual friend, it was arranged that Miss Hindmarsh should give up the freeholds, but keep the Consols. The freeholds to return to her in case of his demise, but should he outlive her, they were to be his absolutely,—unless they should be blessed with children, and a little Captain come to march away with the freeholds on his back.

All things considered, the bargain was a good bargain, and satisfactory to the contracting parties. But one of the drawbacks to the Captain's marketable value (rheumatism) had recently assailed him most unmercifully, and though sufficiently recovered to hobble out and pay his morning call (Miss Hindmarsh would not permit an evening visit), he was not the man he had been, but was forced to give up a little of his consequence, though he could not quite make up his mind to give it up entirely, notwithstanding

the pain it cost him to affect the light and juvenile.

The sight of the Captain acted like magic on her, and fired her with thoughts of speedy vengeance. Thrusting her niece's letter into the depths of one of her capacious pockets, she received him graciously, and wished particularly to know if he should be well enough to accompany her to town the following week; when she thought she could not only make the promised settlement on him, but distract her ungrateful relative by the sight of her intended, and, by her speedy union with him, do away with the likelihood of her ever touching a farthing of her money.

The Captain might be a little worn and faded; but let him only be well enough to travel without fear of a relapse, his natural vigour would assert itself, and his doubly-padded chest swell like a turkey-cock's. Perched upon his little legs, and supported on her bony arm, he would astonish them by his presence, when somebody should see how somebody could make believe as though that small P.S. had never been written in the corner of that most improper letter, and how she could repay the slight shown by the want of reference to her anticipated change, and a neglect of suitable congratulations on her happiness.

The following week would soon come round,

then let her ungracious relative prepare to find how perfectly amiable she could be, and to behold a man renowned in war's alarms, an officer and a gentleman; a man not to be trifled with, but, like a game cock mounted on his own dung-hill, ready to defend her upon all occasions, and stand no nonsense from a wretched slave-driver and his "dog;" or, if he did not, or evinced the slightest falling off, no settlement would she make on him, and not a brick of hers should find its way into his pocket, unless he held her up as something worthy admiration, and proved himself deserving of her patronage, and her freeholds.

CHAPTER XIV.

GOING SOUTH.

Mrs. Rushbrook's letter, although sufficiently explanatory upon the material subject of her daughter's engagement, touched so lightly upon Margaret herself, that her great-aunt had a wide field of speculation thrown open to her as to what she conceived to be the true state of affairs, and did not fail to consider, that the attachment known to exist between that self-willed lady and young Arkwright had hitherto formed the principal hindrance to her present engagement—an attachment Miss Hindmarsh had been at much pains to thwart, but which she conceived to be more lasting than her mother seemed willing to allow.

That her niece was anxious to see her daughter well married, she could readily enough understand. She was equally willing to admit that a girl not wilfully blind to her own interest might easily be won to turn her back upon a poor lover and receive the addresses of a rich one, without endangering her peace of mind or breaking her heart. But then her niece's daughter was obstinate. She knew that by experience; and being

of an obstinate turn herself, she naturally conceived that what was good in one woman's eyes was not good in another's, and thereupon drew her own conclusion upon those particular points so lightly dwelt upon in the letter newly come to hand.

That Margaret should lie awake and sob and appear distressed at the prospect of her brilliant future did not at all agree with Priscilla's notions of a perfect happiness. It rather struck her in the light of a proof positive that Margaret was still thinking of one she had with difficulty consented to abandon, and that, disappointed in her hopes, she was breaking her heart about him in silence and in secret.

The Captain's illness luckily soon passed away —so scon that at the end of the third day of his lay up he was sufficiently well to warrant the delicately-suggested proposal made by Miss Hindmarsh, that on the next but one he should accompany her to London to have the settlement arranged, and be presented to the metropolitan members of her family.

Not that Miss Hindmarsh had any especial predilection for the journey, or wished to endure the fatigue of a day and night's travelling, even with her Captain's pleasant talk to while the time away, or drone the darkness through, and

perhaps distress her by a snore! It was not to this end she had been at such pains to pack her wardrobe, and screw herself upright in the drab interior of the long stage coach; but chiefly with a view to consult the family lawyer—a lawyer time out of mind belonging to the family, and one by whom all the family matters had been arranged ever since the family had matters that required arranging.

That this said lawyer would be astonished at seeing her she did not doubt. It would be an equal novelty to her to indulge in the sight of her lawyer, for she had never seen him. But as her dividends were regularly remitted to her, and as her tenants were under her own control, her lawyer and herself were upon the best of terms, and did not require to be personally acquainted.

Comfortably seated in opposite corners of the dingy drab interior of the coach, ornamented with parsley-and-butter trimmings, faded tassels, and cushions with here and there a button holding by its string, plumping them in places, and securing them like huge beetles with pins through them, Priscilla made up her mind to as much enjoyment as a two hundred and odd miles journey was likely to afford, with the Captain for her *vis-à-vis*, and no probability of anyone

interfering with their *tête-à-tête* all the way to London.

But as time flew by, and mile succeeded mile, that dingy drab interior grew more uncomfortable and confined than ever; and as their conversation rather flagged, and as the Captain's compliments were growing threadbare, Priscilla proposed to relieve the time by sandwiches and sherry—a proposition readily accepted by the Captain, as promising not only food but drink, both of which he began to feel a want of to assist his invention, and make his dear one satisfied with his praises.

Miss Hindmarsh undid her basket, took out a tolerably-sized parcel of sandwiches, but a miserably small flask of sherry; then pouring some into a wine-glass without a foot, she drank to her Captain with her eyes—sipped a gentle sip, was satisfied and refreshed, and poured out a glassful for the Captain—which he drank. The flask was corked, the glass returned to its old place, and then Priscilla thought they should get on famously, and be the best company in the world.

But the Captain had not had half enough. He could have drunk the whole flaskful without winking, and ventured to suggest "another glassful." But Priscilla remembered the currant wine, and thought, if home-made juice had so affected him, what might not sherry do! At a

time too when she was quite at his mercy, shut up in the coach, and beyond reach of guard and coachman, even if they did not make a laughing-stock of her if she appealed to them for protection, and insult her by their dreadful observations.

But the Captain was not the man to be stinted. He had to talk away two hundred miles, or to listen (which was worse) to prudent counsels, and to saintly conversation, having for their theme the peculiar virtue of his opposite neighbour; interspersed with doleful lamentations on his own want of it. A want, which at the last affected him so terribly, he determined to remedy the defect, and fortify endurance by swallowing a stimulant at the very next change of horses. A precaution no doubt rendered necessary by the distance they had to go, and the slow rate at which they travelled, though brandy-and-water was not at all in keeping with Priscilla's notions of sobriety, and almost total abstinence from drink—so that when the Captain returned, and she taxed him by the fume he brought with him into the coach with having drank it—he had nothing left for it but to protest, that the smell must be catching, and to say "he had certainly seen the guard and coachman with their noses in a couple of glasses of something hot, but for

himself, a sip of sherry was enough." And a sip it had been, as the spinster knew.

With the exception of an old lady taken up at some mysterious park-gate, and as safely deposited at another park-gate some distance down the road, not a human creature had entered the depth of that drab depository in which the bride elect, and the anticipating groom, journeyed on their way to London. And, as the old lady was evidently somebody of consequence, and did not choose to enter into conversation with nobodies, the time was not enlivened by any interruption on her part, so that the Captain and his charmer had the talk all to themselves, and began at last to think that they had had enough of it; that a *tête-à-tête* was very well in its way, but that too much of it was a bore.

Priscilla gave over lecturing, the Captain left off flattering, and as the fume of the brandy-and-water had by this time got a little way up to his head, he quietly reposed it upon a bump in the corner, stretched out his legs (carefully avoiding the spinster's, who shifted a little on one side to make room for him), and before he well knew what he was about, fell fast asleep.

Whether the fume of brandy-and-water was as catching as the Captain said it was, we will not stay to inquire. Sleep evidently was. Seeing

her Captain reposing in his corner, and crumpling his dear whisker against the lumpy cushion next the window, Miss Hindmarsh determined to follow his example, and, though sleeping in the corner of a coach was not suggestive of the picturesque, and might derange her curls, or crush her bonnet, Priscilla could not help it. So fast asleep she went, and in the opposite corner indulged in dreams as happy as profound.

How long she slept she could not tell. The day was drawing to a close when the Captain had tucked his head into the corner; and now by the shine of the coach lamps, she saw it was night! She had a faint notion of somebody having opened the coach-door, and of a red face in a white muffler, saying something about "coachman." But whether she had given a shilling, or had dreamt it, she could not undertake to determine.

But this time there was no coachman, and no door thrown open, and what on earth could have awakened her (unless the Captain snoring in his corner) she could not think. She had, at all events, thus much advantage over him—that—whilst he still slept, she was able to put herself to rights, twist her curls, set her bonnet straight, rub her eyes, and take just another sip of sherry. Thus prepared she patiently awaited his waking —or should he still sleep on, resolved to prick

him with a pin, and make believe she was fast asleep, and quite incapable of anything so improper.

After an unusual jingling of harness, a wo-ing in the road, a sudden bringing up of the leaders, and the glimmer of the lights steadily fixed upon the road, she became aware that the coach had stopped, either to take up or set down a passenger; when the guard, having opened the door, let down the steps, and after admitting a man in a drab great-coat and a Glengarry cap, he shut it, swung up behind, and shouted "all right," then the jingling commenced again, the lights went redly on before, and coach and harness rattled as of old.

The sudden pull-up of the coach, the opened door, and the passenger getting in, roused the Captain from his nap, which by the nicest computation had lasted for twenty miles at least.

Starting up aghast, he as suddenly repented, when he felt a grip of his old enemy in one of his shoulders, nipping him like a burning claw! But as this ceased after a time, and as profuse apologies were offered for his ill-manners, Miss Hindmarsh accepted them; said she did not like to wake him as he seemed so fast asleep; but never breathed a word about having been fast asleep herself, nor of the snore, nor of the coach stopping, which she fancied had woke her up.

"As I am a soldier and a gentleman," said the Captain, "I am ashamed of my want of manners. To sleep upon one's post is death. How much more serious, then, is my offence, to sleep, not in the presence of an enemy, but of one——"

Here a rather severe kick upon the shin informed him of what in his sudden wake up he had evidently forgotten—the stranger in the drab great-coat and the Glengarry cap, who sat resting his legs on the opposite seat, and just dozing off into a nap.

The man looked up, rubbed his eyes, then, attracted by the Captain's tone and manner, he stared at him as if not quite knowing what to make of him. That process over, he rubbed his eyes again, shook himself in his corner, and prepared to make himself comfortable for a second time, when the Captain roused him by saying—

"You will, I am sure, sir, agree with me that, for any man to sleep in the presence of a delightful companion is a solecism in good manners, and a piece of forgetfulness not easily to be overlooked or forgotten."

"Weel, as for that," replied the man, with a strong north-country burr, "I canna' pretend to say. I sleep when I want to sleep, an' ax no questions if it's agreeable, or if it ain't."

"But surely," said the Captain, "you will

allow that sleep, however necessary, can be put off, like hunger?"

"I canna' say. All I know is I never put off mine. That is, if there's onything to eat."

"Ay, ay," said the Captain, "in an ordinary case, of course. But you would not surely eat or sleep to the neglect of your duty?"

"I dinna knaw wha' I might be inclined to doo, if I was forced to it," replied the man. "I only know I must wait till I *am* forced, you see, before I give over eating an' sleeping at natural times an' seasons, as I want to sleep the noo, which was' the reason why I got inside the coach, though as a rule I prefer the out."

"There now again is a strange perversity in our notions. You take things in the ordinary sense, I in the exceptional. For instance. No man, I maintain, with the feelings of a gentleman—with the feelings of a military man, at least—would sleep in the presence of a lady."

"Weel. I dinna ken. It's wha' you did yoursel just noo, an' that, I suppose, wasn't exceptional. There's na great harm I tak it, to put it yer own way, in a man's sleeping in the presence of his gude woman."

"That, sir," said the Captain, taking him up sharply, and as if he had a mind to give a proof of his military acquirements on the spot, "is not

the proper way of speaking in the presence of this lady, who has not, as yet, conferred upon any man the privilege of sleeping in her presence."

"But granted she had," persisted the man. "What then?"

"Then, sir," replied the Captain, "that man ought to be too powerfully impressed with the honour conferred upon him ever to relinquish a wakefulness by which he might have an opportunity to do her service, and secure to himself the treasure of her esteem."

"Oh! I see," said the other; "a man must wait till this leddy takes him for better nor worse before he goes to sleep. But aterwards he may do just as he pleases."

This was a cruel way of putting it, and the Captain felt it to be so. It was evidently taking his own reading the right way, but, as it fell out, the wrong way for him. Not a little stung to be so driven in a corner, he might have answered tartly, or grown pugnacious after his usual habit, had not Miss Hindmarsh come to his assistance, and put an end to the debate.

"It is a matter scarcely worth talking of, Captain," said the lady. "Certainly not, when we take into consideration how ill you have been, and how fatiguing it is travelling so many miles in a confined space like this. I should not be

surprised at anybody's sleeping, if only to get the time over, and be better company when one wakes."

This was treading on the Captain's corns with a vengeance. It was impossible to be better company than he had been, and how to keep up his strain of high-flown compliment to the proper standard taxed his invention rather sorely. But as a relief had come to him in the shape of the passenger in the drab great-coat, he felt that, with his assistance, a little variety might be infused into the discourse, so as to enable him to get over the ground more easily.

Having thanked Miss Hindmarsh for her amiable consideration, he attacked the stranger right and left, inquired how he came to be upon the road so late, the object of his travelling, and why, if he might ask, he had not taken the coach at the last stage instead of stopping it on the road.

"Weel, for the matter o' that," replied the man, stretching his legs still further upon the opposite cushion, "you see the coach an' I could no quite mack up our minds to meet at the right place. I came over here from Alnwick, round by Newcas'le, an' having different places to go to, I took my chance of meetin' one of the lang stages going south, either from Berwick or Carlisle."

"You are from the north, then?"

"Why, ay; I am fra' the north, there's na' doubts about that, an' dinna care how soon I get back agin."

"Travelling on business, I presume?"

"I should na' travel for pleasure such a distance as I may have to go, you may tack my word for it. But as something gude may come of it, it's worth the trouble anyhow, so I don't so much complain."

"I hope you will find your account in it," replied the Captain.

"It may come to that, if I have any luck, though it's a plaguy way to go to hunt for it."

"What, to London! That's no great matter, after all, and the distance soon got over even in a long stage-coach."

"Oh, it's nat London I am going to just the noo. I have to go to Bristol first, an' then, the deuce kens where."

"To Bristol!" cried the spinster, half asleep, and attracted by the name of the town in which her niece had met the first of all first mates belonging to the *Nancy*.

"Ay, mum, to Bristol; but it's nat my own choice, look you. As I said before, it's a little business tacks me there, to mack inquiries a'ter some one I want, though for any chance o'

hearing of him there I may as weel look for snaw at midsummer. But it's the port I want, an', as I may have to tack a voyage out from there, why, you see, I may as weel mack inquiries beforehand, an' drive as tight a bargain as I can. It's nae use throwing gude money to fetch in bad, an' come off a loser after a', mayhap."

"You gentlemen from the north are not much given to that sort of thing," said the Captain, with a good-natured laugh.

"Na, we're no such fools. But as I have some brass to spare, an' a bit o' time hanging on my hands, I may as weel go in for a wee bit speculation, an' belikely run a chance to mack a tidy thing of it. If I only find out what I want, an' can bring my evidence to bear, some one may be the richer, an' a slice of the cake an' a few of the plums find their way into my pouch."

As there was no more to be said upon the subject, and as the passenger's conversation presented no points of interest to his hearers, the Captain gave over further questioning.

The Glengarry cap was pulled over the stranger's eyes, Miss Hindmarsh was nodding, and, by repeated jerks of her head, appeared in danger of dislocating her neck; while the Captain vainly tried to keep his eyes wide open, and watch

his charmer off, preparatory to going off himself. This, on the score of good manners, he felt bound to do before he retired from the world, and left the universe to its fate.

By what mysterious agency it was brought about, the Captain never after ventured to inquire. Whether the north countryman, Miss Hindmarsh, or himself first set the example, he could not tell; but sleep they did, and never woke until first a lurch, then a tilt, when over went the coach, and deposited the Captain and his charmer on the doubled-up person of the speculative passenger, who, groaning under their weight, and vainly trying to extricate himself, first cursed the Captain, then the lady, and spluttered his discontent in a series of most rasping burrs, enough to stun one. Now, had he been wide awake, as his countrymen generally are, instead of blaming them, he should have blamed the coachman, who, by nodding when he had no right to nod, had let the horses get too near the side of the road, and caused that sudden lurch, by which the long stage-coach had lost its perpendicular.

Turned over on a bank, its outsides were thrown off, and its three insides tumbled in a corner, to the terror of the lady, the dismay of the Captain, and the utter annihilation of the

gentleman in the drab great-coat, who, calling lustily, threatened and stormed, but at the last was forced to take things quietly until he managed to heave off the weight under which he had lain, then, shouting ten thousand murders, swore he'd be revenged.

"Confound all lang stage-coaches, an' all coachmen too! All southern roads and southern company! an' may the deil fly awa' wi' that woman for diggin her elbows into me as if she had been kneading in a trough, an' wanted to work me into sponge. If ever I trust mysel' inside a coach wi' such as her again, may I——"

Scrambling from the upside door of the overturned coach, the half-smothered north countryman emerged, minus his cap, and in his haste to get into the road, left the volley of his oaths imperfect. Then, suddenly turning round, and shouting to the distracted spinster, and the no less confounded Captain, lying pell mell and huddled at the bottom, he cried—

"Tack care o' my bonnet down there, will you! It's a capital bonnet, an' almost as gude as new. I hold you responsible for it, an' you'll ha' to pay for it if any harm comes to it. I bought it at Paisley, an' its nat every day you'll get a bonnet like that, I can tell you."

After some time, and not before it was neces-

sary, Miss Hindmarsh and the Captain were safely brought to light, and landed in the middle of the road, where, in the midst of darkness, only half recovered from the fright, and sadly shaken by the fall, they had to listen to the shouts of their drab-coated companion for the restitution of his cap. And when at last it was thrown to him, he clapped it on his head, strutted up and down among the groaning passengers, bragged of it incessantly, and swore he would not have lost it for nearly the price of a new one.

As the unlucky overthrow took place at a considerable distance from the nearest town, and as it would require time and help to right the coach, the guard mounted one of the horses, and rode off to procure a vehicle in which to carry the injured passengers the next stage, where they could sleep for the night, and, if well enough, resume their journey in the morning.

The passengers who were unhurt agreed to walk, leaving the others behind with Miss Hindmarsh and the Captain. But the north countryman, though he hadn't a scratch on him, swore he would not walk a yard for all the coach proprietors in England; said "he had paid his fare to Newark, and to Newark he would go, or if they did not take him, let them prepare to defend an action for breach of con-

tract, or pay for a post-chaise, whichever they liked."

For three long mortal hours had Miss Hindmarsh to bewail the downfall of the coach, and for three long mortal hours did the Captain endure her lamentations, listen to her murmurs, and bear the load of her reproaches for having prevailed upon her (as she said) to go by that particular coach, when it had been her own selection, and insisted on against his wishes. But so it was to be; and though the Captain had reason to apprehend a return of his rheumatism from being exposed to the raw night air, he bore it patiently, and, like a soldier and a gentleman, quietly submitted to what he could not avoid.

Meanwhile the owner of the Glengarry cap kept pacing up and down, loud in his threats of an action for detention and hindrance in his business, when an old post coach was driven to the scene of the mishap, into which he jumped, and swearing he would be the first served, occupied the best seat, side by side with Miss Hindmarsh, while the poor shivering Captain gave place to a passenger whose ankle was sprained, and after helping in another who was badly bruised, contented himself with a seat on the box.

Too proud to ask the loan of the north country-

man's overcoat, and certain to be refused if he asked it (for like the bonnet it was no doubt a capital coat), the Captain faced the night in his buttoned up frock coat, bravely and manfully; and though the padding kept his little narrow chest tolerably warm, his limbs were so cold when he arrived at the inn, he was obliged to swallow a glass of hot brandy and water to restore his circulation.

Miss Hindmarsh had been snug and warm inside, and had had a sip or two of sherry to quiet her nerves. But the Captain's imbibitions filled her with alarm! This was the second glass he had had. It was of no use his saying he had not (not that he said he had not), for she had seen him. There was no guard or coachman now on whom to lay the blame, neither could he say the fume was "catching," though he had most wickedly assured her that it was, the time before.

CHAPTER XV.

A NIGHT AT THE CASTLE.

Arrived at the inn, and thanking her lucky stars she had escaped, not only the danger, but the extreme awkwardness of the situation in which she had found herself after being dragged out of the coach, and slightly shocked at the notion of having been pulled heels foremost through the window, Miss Hindmarsh lost no time in placing herself under the landlady's protection, and begged to be permitted to sleep under her immediate eye. Her agitation was so extreme she did not know what to think at first, but the more she thought, could come to no other conclusion than that the Captain had barbarously arranged to have the coach upset on purpose; that the man in the Glengarry cap was a conspirator in his pay, and that settlement or no settlement, he was determined to make sure of her, and compel her to accept him on any terms.

But as the landlady only laughed at her, and had not even the good manners to condole with her on her misfortunes, she withdrew behind the impregnability of her virtue, and, to strengthen her

position, called in the services of the chambermaid, who, it was arranged, should sleep with her, and so prevent the possibility of any scandal arising out of the upset of the coach, and the suspicious detention of herself and her admirer at an inn upon the road.

This matter settled to her mind, and the Captain complaining he was hungry, supper was ordered, of which, to do her justice, Miss Hindmarsh partook abundantly. But as the north countryman could not be prevailed upon to sup (except on the understanding that the landlady was to put it down as "extras" to the coach) he kept a steady walk up and down the inn passage, and glancing every now and then into the mysteries of the little bar-parlour, looked as if waiting an opportunity either to steal the spoons, or speak with the landlady, who every time the Glengarry cap was seen taking an observation over the blind, tossed her head, and more emphatically than politely, denounced all travellers from the north, and the wearer of the famous cap in particular, as being too mean to pay for a supper, but who expected to be treated and fed for nothing, which she said she'd see him further before she'd do, and that he might as well give over looking in at her for any good he'd get by it.

But the north countryman had other ends in

view. True, he did not wish to be fleeced, nor to pay for supper at an inn, when a penny loaf and a slice of cheese would answer the purpose, and cost a mere nothing in comparison. So out he went, and after a time returned, munching and muttering to himself that this time anyhow he had saved his brass, and not sent good money after bad.

But good or bad, the north countryman had been wiser had he for once departed from his careful habits and spent his money like a man. Instead of which, he delayed and haggled; grudged the price of a supper, and, utterly forgetful of the necessity he had of making a friend of the landlady, disgusted her, and set her dead against him —at the very time he ought to have known how much depended on her, and that she was better able to assist him in his search than anyone else in the wide world.

Thus, walking up and down whistling, or in a succession of confounding burrs expressing his indignation, as though he had a mind to try the strength of his Northumberland tongue upon the yielding accents of the south, the drab-coated passenger looked remarkably cute, and felt himself remarkably clever.

But then, unfortunately, the landlady had a burr as well, and though she complained of the

passenger as coming from the Border, she had evidently an old acquaintance with its dialect, and looked as if she only wanted the opportunity to rate him soundly in it for his shabbiness, and for daring to peep in at her over the blind.

That she had a temper, and only required a little rousing to show it, was plain as daylight. There was a dangerous look about her mouth, and a suppressed fire in her eyes, leading you to infer that, upon the shortest possible notice, she could not only keep her place in order, but her customers too. She was a good-looking, buxom woman, and at one time must have been singularly handsome. But then the expression of her face was against her, and marred what beauty yet remained by a coarse and dogged look; so that on first seeing her, you felt inclined to set her down as a person it was as well neither to encourage or offend.

She gave you the notion of a woman indebted to a handsome face and figure for her rise in life, but who did not quite know how to behave herself, or to adapt her manners to her altered position. Instead of listening and conducting herself as any sensible landlady would have done, she did not seem to care a pin what people thought, nor what Miss Hindmarsh thought, for on that lady's requesting her protection against the insidious

designs of the Captain, she squared her elbows on the table, and laughed so boisterously, that Priscilla thought she must be in the Captain's pay as well, or some dreadfully coarse-minded woman, who rather rejoiced at female griefs than pitied them.

All this was mortifying enough, but nothing to the sudden burst of indignation which filled that damsel's breast, when, on pointing out the Captain, and telling her of the wickedness of which she fancied he meant to be guilty, the landlady threw herself back in her chair, then choking with laughter, said, "She would chuck him under her arm if he showed any nonsense before her, and did not conduct hissel properly in the Cas'le according to custom."

Now the north countryman was a man cast in a different mould. He was strong and burly, and by his manner showed he was used to rough it, and could take his part in a game of strife; close shaven, square-jawed, and of a cast of countenance that might pass muster in a crowd. You might meet a hundred like him in a walk in the north of England, and never stop to inquire if one was like the other, or in what particular this one differed from the rest. The only noticeable fact about him being a peculiar kind of cunning—a low-browed look of shrewdness,

mixed with that unmistakeable independence of bearing peculiar to his countrymen, by no means suggestive of the meanness of which he had been found guilty by the indignant landlady.

The more he looked over the red blind, the more the landlady became incensed, and shifting her seat, turned her back on him, instead of favouring him with a sight of that same buxom countenance many a well-to-do farmer in the neighbourhood had been glad to see filling one side of his chimney-corner, but for the fear of being turned out of the other by the easily-to-be-put-out mistress of the Castle—a lady of so violent a temper, it had been stated that her late husband was quite as much indebted to her excitability, as to his own partiality for intoxicating liquors, for hastening his end.

Scarcely had Mrs. Savaker turned her back before the Glengarry cap approached to take a closer view over the top of the red curtain, while its wearer, inspecting the furniture and fittings of the bar-parlour in which the landlady was sitting, appeared to be taking stock of all he saw.

On one side of the room hung a dauby portrait of the late proprietor—a face like a red cabbage, and a blue coat with brass buttons, being the distinguishing features in this work of art, while a yellow waistcoat and a thunder-and-lightning

sky completed it, and left nothing for the most ardent admirer of the late Mr. Savaker to desire.

Mrs. Savaker hung opposite, attired in a crimson dress and pea-green scarf. A magnificent turban and a waving feather took in the top of her head, but left the curls at liberty to wander over her lovely breast in company with her watch chain; red, blue, and yellow doing their best to make the pair agreeable, their hues combining to dazzle and confound all rash intruders into the precincts of that small bar-parlour, wherein the landlady was sitting, frugally supping upon bread and cheese, and adding up a row of figures on a slate.

The Northumbrian's inspection had been close, but not so close as he desired, seeing that he still kept eyeing sharply round, and glancing about, as if half expecting to find a third portrait somewhere in the room; but whether of a gentleman as ruddy-faced as Mr. Savaker, or of a lady as elegantly attired as Mrs. Savaker, the searching eyes peeping over the red blind must answer for themselves.

The passengers rescued by the old post-chaise were supping on cold roast-beef, bread, and pickles, at the time the landlady was scoring on a slate how much their suppers would come to, and thinking how the sum total would have been increased

had that mean-spirited fellow in the Glengarry cap supped as well—a fellow she flattered herself she had sent about his business by turning her back on him; never supposing it had had the contrary effect, and enabled him to peep unobserved over her shoulder into every hole and corner of the room.

Satisfied with his inspection, and convinced there was nothing further to be seen, the Northumbrian stood for a while undecided what to do. But as he had to find out something, and get at certain information through the landlady, he made a sudden resolution, turned the handle of the door, and without waiting to be asked, walked into the little bar-parlour, to the intense disgust, and not a little to the surprise, of the indignant landlady.

"Weel, Mrs. Savaker," said the Northumbrian, with a burr enough to take the polish off the furniture, "an' hoo has it been wi' ye sin' ye left our parts, an' married the exciseman at Newark?"

Mrs. Savaker had been taken unawares. At the first sound of the Northumbrian's voice, and seeing him so near her supper-table, she drew back amazed. But at the mention of "our parts" she expressed some curiosity in her look, and glancing towards her unprofitable customer,

eyed him down from head to foot in a vain endeavour to recall some recollection of having seen him before.

Suspecting by his tone and manner he knew more than he chose to tell, and that he had an intimate knowledge of her movements before she espoused the blue-coated ex-exciseman, whose red face hung slantways against the wall, as if glad to be out of the way and safe from further damage, she stared at him and cried—

"Our parts?"

"Ay," said the passenger, "our parts, where aince upon a time Poll Woodruff got her living by hoeing in the fields, when an uncle of mine held Black Acre Farm, an' did not care a jot who hoed or who reaped, so lang as his land was weel kept, an' he made a gude penny by it."

"Oh," said Mrs. Savaker, with a toss of her head, "an' is it out o' that you expect to get a sup an' a bite for nought?"

"You're no yet near the mark," replied the unabashed Northumbrian. "It's no for a supper I am here, but for a little talk about old times, an' to come at something like a guess of what you have been doing sin', as the folks at Alnwick know well enough, you left hoeing, an'—"

"An' if they do," interrupted the landlady, "I'd like to know what they mean by sending a

long-coated chap like you to poke his nose in what is business of mine, nat theirs. It's no' to them I am accountable for my actions, an' I'd like to see ony o' them trying to mack me, that's a'. So you may as weel leave off your babblement, an' gang whar' you're going ta."

Here the landlady attacked the bread and cheese rather viciously, while the north countryman, not in the least put out, settled himself in a chair, and eyed about him with a contented smile. Satisfied that he had the veritable Poll Woodruff sitting before him in the person of the exciseman's widow, he did not hurry to reply, but took his time about it, and appeared to take delight at her chagrin. At last he said—

"It's pretty weel known down at Alnwick hoo that matter ended, an' it ma' be worth your while to keep a gude account of it yoursel', an' pay attention to a' things relating to it. I go no further nor that. Wi' the exciseman I have nought to do, although I am much obliged to him" (here he cast his eyes at the red-cabbage face hanging a little on one side, as if listening out of its favourite ear) "for coming to the rescue, an' marrying you after the first business turned out badly. Had it no been for that, an' for ane of our neighbours hearing of it by accident, I should ha' never found you out, nor thou't o' looking for

you at the Cas'le at Newark. That's what I shouldn't, Mrs. Savaker."

"An' noo you ha' found me," cried the landlady, rather fiercely, "what do you think to get by it? I owe nobody a ha'penny, an' ha' no family as is to be made better by me, nor as can walk into my house an' eat me out of it, as you'd wish to do, if you'd only got a chance."

"Not much fear o' that, with a gude coaching trade an' plenty of customers to keep the pot boiling," replied the other. "But wasn't there some one left behind, whom you'd feel inclined to open your doors to, provided he wanted your assistance, an' was to come an' ax it?"

"Wha' do you mean?" cried Mrs. Savaker, as she looked the passenger full in the face, squared her elbows on the table, and sat opposite him with a half downcast, half defiant air.

"Oh! you know what I mean well enough," replied her questioner, perfectly at his ease, and returning the landlady's glance with a steadfast gaze. "I dinna say he's like to come an' ax it; but if he war, an' you could mack him out to be the same, you don't pretend you'd turn your back on him, as you did on me just the noo, for fear he should want a bite an' a sup, an' might no' be able to pay for it? You don't mean to say you'd do that, Mrs. Savaker, do you?"

"I don't knaw what I might do, if he turned out as inquisitive a loon as yoursel'. A fellow who has a mind to be dipping his ladle into some one else's crowdy, an' stirring it up, thinking to fish up something for hissel'," cried Mrs. Savaker, with a baffled though still angry look, as she met the cunning eyes of the north countryman fixed on her with a strange inquiry in their glance.

"But suppose he did no turn out to be inquisitive, but was only seeking his nateral relation, an' rather taken aback at finding what a mighty person she had grown into sin' the time he war shifted over to the care of a good-natured body in the north, as promised to be a friend to him, an' set him on his legs, out o' love to her dead lad, whose like he war, gin he only proved honest an' industrious. That's more nor his father did, I tack it. A cheating, thievish——"

Mrs. Savaker had evidently been at some pains to control her temper. Doubtful of what her inquirer's object might be, and equally uncertain as to the extent of his information, she let him have his say, with only an occasional break upon the conversation, and patiently awaited the north countryman's explanation.

Finding this of an unpleasant nature, and that he was acquainted with matters she wished to keep concealed, she broke into a towering pas-

sion, abused him for a mean-spirited fellow, who thought to come and frighten her by some trumped-up tale or other, and finally ordered him out of the bar-parlour into which he had thrust himself, to try, as she said, to make a market out of her, thinking to sell his secret for twice as much as it was worth, or that she would buy him off, rather than have him explain particulars of her previous life; the respectability of which might be open to discussion, and likely to discredit her among the good folks at Newark, were it known.

Mrs. Savaker was no contemptible opponent, as the Northumbrian found to his cost, when fairly put upon her mettle. The temper which had subdued the exciseman subdued the north countryman. Flashing upon him an indignant glance, her eyes seemed to glow and burn, while her words burst like a torrent on him, compelling him to leave the room crestfallen, and glad to escape with a whole skin.

He had been thus far successful in his search that, should it at any time be necessary, he would be in a position to prove her identity, and establish the fact that Mrs. Savaker and Poll Woodruff were one and the same. But as he despaired of obtaining the information he desired (provided she could enlighten him, which he

doubted), he determined to follow up the original scent, when who knew how soon he might be able to obtain a slice of the much-desired cake, and insure a grateful recognition of his services from the person he hoped to find?

He lit his candle, and going off to bed after the first brush, left the landlady mistress of the field, swelling with indignation, and in admirable cue for a quarrel with anybody! Her temper once fairly roused, she determined to give it vent, and following the retreating skirts of the drab great-coat, she trusted to find something at fault sufficient to justify the bursting of the fag end of the storm, which, as a rule, was always the worst part of it, and least likely to be forgotten.

Acting on this amiable intention, she unluckily remembered that the chambermaid had been bespoke by the terrified spinster as a body-guard, and that the hussy was in her first nap, and reposing side by side with the lath-and-plaster maiden newly arrived in the old post-chaise.

Bursting into the room without more ado, she caught the spinster just as she was preparing for bed, and frightened her so dreadfully that, thinking it was the Captain, she rolled herself up in one of the bed-curtains, and shrieked and screamed as if the house were falling about her ears.

Boiling with passion, and incensed out of all patience on hearing the screech with which Mrs. Hindmarsh greeted her appearance, Mrs. Savaker bawled out—

"Wha's the mistress of this hoose, I should like to knaw? an' wha' pays rent an' taxes? Is it you or me, or that starved gawk of a feller as you made such a fuss about, an' took to sleepin' double in ain of my best beds wi' that ne'er-do-weel hussy yonder, snortin' an' snorin' when she's got her wark to do, an' ought to be thinking about it, instead of buryin' her head in the piller an' sleepin' like a leddy? Is it you or me, I ax; an' if it's no' you, I'd like to knaw if it's that wee snip-snap of a man as is going to tack the Cas'le on his shoulders an' turn me out into the streets? He's no like to do it just the noo, or if he tries it, I'll tie him in a sack an' bang his banes for him wi' a rollin'-pin—thar' noo!"

The mention of a rolling-pin in connexion with her Captain's bones so terribly alarmed her, that Miss Hindmarsh could scarcely refrain from indulging in another shriek, and might have availed herself of that feminine resource, had not the landlady, with recovered breath, burst on her like a waterspout, and overwhelmed her with a torrent of peculiar and unmatched power.

"Thar's no two words to be said about it, so

either pack up your duds an' go, or sleep by yoursel', an' not turn the Cas'le out o' winder by your pretended modesty, an' your fear of a whisp of a man as might be blawed awa' in a high wind, an' naebody stay to ax which way he went. Not like that great big ketty of a feller, wi' his bonnet an' his lang skirts, as pays for naething, a'ter sitting inside my sha' and making hissel' smart an' enticing to yoursel'. It's him, I tack it, you're afeard on—him with the empty stomach, an' smelling of the bread an' cheese and the yell he bought outside; an' my place to be turned topsy-turvy to mack room for him, an' my parlour to be made free wi', an' mysel' to be questioned an' cross-questioned, as if he war a lawyer at York Assizes, an' naebody to say 'no' to him. If I war a man, I'd ding his he'd for 'um, or douse 'um in the chops, for meddling wi' a better woman than ever his mither was."

Partially recovering her alarm, but indignant at the notion of a high wind running off with her Captain, Miss Hindmarsh folded her shawl about her, and in her severest manner met the landlady's upbraiding, if with a fluttering, yet with a fortitude quite worthy of her.

"Woman, you are insolent! You are rude and impertinent, and instead of being grateful for my condescending to repose under your roof,

you are positively audacious. If the Captain was not asleep, and could be prevailed upon to demean himself by holding words with such a creature, I would have him called to take you by the shoulders, and turn you out of the room where you have so rudely intruded into the presence of a lady of family and fortune."

"Do ca' him—do! an' see how soon I'll mack him hip upon his wee bit heels, an' scurry off as if he had a lop in his lug. He ain't the first man I've had a bustle wi', an' would gi' a shilling if he'd come in noo, to catch you wi' your curl crackers, an' see the ends o' your shawl sticking to your shoulders like a wet sheet hanging on a line. It's a grand Captain he is, no doubt; an' a grand lady you are, to want an' ill-faur'd wench to sleep wi' you. But I'll soon settle this. Up wi' you, you dawdy! get out o' my best sheets, an' if you want to snore, snore in your ain bed, an' leave off rubbin' the piller into holes, or I'll mack you pay for it out of your wage."

Roused from her first sleep, which promised to be a lasting one, the unfortunate chambermaid was bundled out of bed only half awake and shivering with cold. She had been dreaming an uncommonly nice dream, and one so real, it was some time before she could make out that she was not on the point of being married to the ostler,

who but a minute before had taken the ring out of his pocket and put it on her finger.

Following on her heels, and abusing her till she was out of hearing, Mrs. Savaker went muttering about the house, only half satisfied with her exploit, and willing to return to the charge as fresh as ever. But as Miss Hindmarsh did not desire a repetition of her visit, and had rather had the worst of the encounter, she put the washstand and a couple of chairs against the door, double-locked it, and then betook herself to the warm side vacated by the chambermaid, covered her head with the bed-clothes, offered up a prayer for safety, and never woke till she was called.

The damaged coach was righted, the horses were harnessed, and the coachman had mounted his box the following morning, when Miss Hindmarsh, leaning on the Captain's arm, took her place inside, and occupied her old corner opposite her beau.

There was no Northumbrian now to interrupt their *tête-à-tête*, or stretch his muddy boots upon the cushion. He had taken his departure an hour or two before, and was not likely to be picked up upon the road after what he had said of going to Bristol.

But before going, he had paid his bill; not to the landlady, but Boots. Boots being her appointed agent when she was rather late in bed, and to him the Northumbrian discharged his bill; gave him twopence for himself, and made it a bargain with him, that in return he should make his compliments to his mistress, and say, "that some day or other, he hoped to see Mrs. Poll again, and have a talk with her about old times, and the doings at Black Acre Farm."

This message, it is presumed, Boots faithfully delivered, from the fact of his having received a receipt in full in the shape of a box on the ears from Mrs. Savaker, enough to wake the dead! a method of liquidating an account he by no means approved, and though the twopence at first seemed satisfactory, that which he got for it was dear at any price, and left one side of his face tingling till dinner-time.

CHAPTER XVI.

A FRIENDLY MEETING.

PRUDENTIAL reasons had had their weight with Mrs. Rushbrook. Her elder daughter disposed of, and this small domestic barter fairly off her hands, she sat down to review her course of action, hoping to ease her conscience and console herself with the reflection that she had done the best thing possible, first for her daughter, and next for herself.

Had Margaret been less yielding, had she stood on the defensive, and opposed her mother's notions for her good, Mrs. Rushbrook might have had to resort to different measures to coax her into compliance. But finding her quiescent, and, unknown to her, influenced in her conduct by the presumed indifference shown her by young Arkwright, she took it for granted that she had consented to a sort of self-sacrifice for the good of her family, and to prove how much she was devoted to them.

Now this self-sacrifice was, in her mother's eyes, no sacrifice at all. It was but struggling for a time against a girlish passion, and as this

struggling would in the end be rewarded by a first-rate establishment and a place of consequence in the world, she had no difficulty in smoothing down the edges of a little conscientious scruple, and resting satisfied, that as a mother she had disposed of her daughter wisely and well.

Had she felt more as a woman and less as a mother, she would have looked below the surface of her daughter's reluctant obedience to her wish. She would have fathomed the depths of that young girl's misery, and out of her silent, uncomplaining sorrow, have arrived at a closer knowledge of her thoughts. Content to take things as they were, and accept the sacrifice upon any terms, she neglected the important duty of ascertaining how far that sacrifice might destroy her daughter' peace, and how little likely it was to contribute to her own—should the union turn out badly, or her daughter's previously engaged affections render her married life unhappy.

She could not plead ignorance as to the peculiar characteristics of her future son-in-law. Her husband had explained them fully; and her own discernment enabled her to appreciate his character without much difficulty. She could understand, that trustful and amiable as he ap-

peared to be, there yet remained an undercurrent of obstinate determination about him, which at the least appearance of doubt, or opposition, would manifest itself in storm and passion—or in a worse form still, exhibit itself in coldness, or in ceaseless watchfulness. Ever on the alert to detect something to his disadvantage, who knew how soon he might discover it; imagine a wrong, and bent on seeking it, magnify an inadvertence into an intentional offence; guess at conclusions, and making light of probabilities, warp all things to his own way of thinking? Be jealous and suspicious on insufficient grounds, and, predisposed by the peculiarity of his nature to imagine treachery, never rest satisfied till he thought he had found it.

Was this the husband to be trusted with her daughter's peace? Was he the man to whom she could, with a safe conscience, transfer the keeping of her daughter's happiness, despite the knowledge she had beforehand of her engaged affections? To acquaint him with it would be folly. Yet, by concealing it, she ran the risk of future discontent; of exciting a jealousy likely to call his evil nature into play, and of afterwards giving him an opportunity to complain of want of confidence in their treatment of him.

He had spoken of confidence as being essential

to their happiness. Yet, at the outset, she was withholding it; was filling his quiver full of poisoned arrows, and could she wonder if, at some future time, he flung at her the weapons she had been at so much pains to arm him with? It might so happen that he would never find it out, and have no reason to complain. But if he did, how could she explain her conduct, or find fault with him if he retaliated, and made her daughter pay the penalty of their mutual deception!

Droop down your head, poor girl, and never count the tears that flow, nor press the aching heart that throbs with ceaseless pain! The time is gone when hope and love sprung twin-born from your breast, and the hour passed, which to recall you would have poured out life and hope and all! But with that fleeting fickle "yes" her fate was bound! Her word was pledged, and true even to her own undoing, Margaret felt that word to be irrevocable, and that for good or ill, her mother's request had been complied with, and her father's wish obeyed.

It was the future she had to do with now—to turn to that and let the past shift for itself; or, if at times it should be recalled, and its happiness present a contrast in that unknown time to come, then let it serve for silent musing

and for saddest thoughts; arm her with courage to endure, and out of her wrecked hopes enable her to preserve some record of the days gone by to comfort and uphold her on her way.

Thus day by day passed on, yet day by day the morning came and found her cheerless, though resolved. Keen as the wound had been, and deeply as her lover's indifference had pained her, she felt she had the courage to endure and watch the healing. It might be years to come, and her affections, bruised at first, be slow of after-growth; yet strong in her endeavour to be just, she not only prepared to prove her constancy, but to forget, if possible, when first that wound was given.

The meeting at Mrs. Blissett's, she hoped, might effect a change in her daily round of life, and take her from herself; and to this end she prepared to join her mother and her sister on their promised visit. Ellerton, it was arranged, was to be of the party, since having heard of her engagement through her husband, Mrs. Blissett had invited him with a view to make the evening as social, as she hoped it would be agreeable.

Margaret would infinitely have preferred that this meeting should not take place. She had a fear of strangers' eyes, and of Mrs. Blissett's eyes especially. She had daughters, too—young,

fair, and amiable daughters—and Margaret apprehended that those young girls, better instructed in the ways of love, and, by their very nature, more capable of discovering a secret grief like hers than their mother or their father, might guess at what was working in her mind, and, at the sight of Ellerton, become acquainted with the secret of her misery and the cause of her dejection.

She had to face all this; and, under their inspection, endure his attentions as her acknowledged lover, to listen and to smile and appear contented, at the very time she was in the acutest state of suffering, and her heart aching with the thoughts of one, she knew too late, to be its sole possessor.

Bitter the contrast—terrible the regret! And now, when all the conflict was at its height, and her fondness came to fight with pride, to acquit her lover of neglect, and invent excuses for him, she began to blame herself for want of confidence in his affection—now the time had come, when she must consent to appear as Ellerton's affianced bride, and devoted to him.

Anger and love, the hopelessness of contentment, and the endurance of a ceaseless misery, all fighting in her breast distracted her, until at last she almost longed for the fatal hour to come

when she should be irrevocably pledged, and her duty become her safeguard. No Frederick Arkwright could then engross her thoughts, or fill her mind with constant torment. She should have conscience and propriety to guide her, and were he then to cross her mind, or be a hundred times more handsome and attractive than he had been, she felt she could cast away the very thought of him, and utterly forget that he had ever lived. At least she thought so then.

Ellerton had come according to appointment. Prepared to act the part of beau, he no doubt expected she was equally ready to be the willing belle. Her mother and her sister had gone down some time before, and, victim like, she knew that she must follow; prepare to receive him with a smile, and by her manner lead him to suppose that his visit was agreeable to her.

After a little pardonable vanity bestowed upon her toilet, she went downstairs, once more to have her hand detained in his, and be complimented on her charming looks, when her thoughts were far away, and dwelling on some one better loved than he could ever hope to be.

Then, as the carriage Ellerton had provided for their accommodation rolled along, and her sister smiled, and mother looked contented, she contrasted her present luxury and ease

with the toil and hardship she had hoped to share with another, and thought how gladly she would have changed places, and endured the worst of penury and want only to have had Frederick by her side, and be rewarded by a smile for her patient suffering and endurance. Footsore, exhausted by fatigue, still to keep pace with him, so that in the end she could be repaid by his affection, and know he was her own! his welfare her ambition, his good the aim of all her thoughts.

The family was expecting them. Mrs. Blissett and her two daughters, Mr. Blissett and his son. It was, as had been previously arranged, strictly a family meeting; and though at first Mrs. Rushbrook appeared a little overcome at venturing into a company of smiling faces so soon after her husband's death, Mrs. Blissett's kindness reassured her and set her at her ease. Welcomed like old friends, the novelty of the meeting soon wore off, and, the introduction over, goodwill and cordiality were cheerfully exchanged.

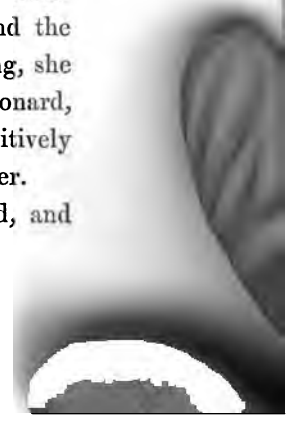
Bertha protested a life of friendship to the younger daughter on the spot, and, though she blushed a little, and appeared rather nervous when Mr. Blissett junior was introduced to her, she showed no signs of trepidation after-

wards. That they had met before was sufficiently apparent, though how that meeting had been brought about, and by what means—whether, as in her sister's case, she had met with him, as Margaret had met with Frederick, accidentally or by previous introduction, no one could tell. The secret had been well kept, and so it must remain.

Mr. Blissett looked, as he really was, delighted to see them, and said so over and over again. He welcomed Ellerton as an old friend; took him by the arm; led him to the fireplace, and, as the hearthrug is generally the place selected for a little conversation, they soon became engaged in what appeared to be an interesting debate. Mrs. Blissett in the meantime took charge of Mrs. Rushbrook; and sitting next her on a sofa, left the younger members of her family and their visitors to make their own arrangement.

Now, it had occurred to Mr. Leonard Blissett that Bertha had a charming voice, and that she sang like an angel. Bertha said she never sang, and appealed to her sister to bear out her statement. But as Margaret only smiled, and the Miss Blissetts said they knew she could sing, she yielded at last, and, solely to oblige Mr. Leonard, sat down to the piano and sang, if not positively like an angel, yet in a very pleasing manner.

Mr. Leonard was, of course, delighted, and



led her back to her chair more in love with her than ever. But what was the matter with his mother and the widow. His father, too, seemed as much put out as they were, and stood rubbing up his hair, as he turned first to one, then to the other, when, finding dumb-show useless, he said aloud—

"But, my dear madam, I wont hear of such a thing. It is utterly impossible; and how you could be so cruel as to suggest it after the difficulty we had in getting you here, strikes me with dismay. What, go! almost as soon as you have come, and leave us just as we were about making up our minds to a pleasant evening? I say no!—emphatically no! and as any friend of yours must, of course, be welcome, the best plan would be for Leonard to run to your house and bring the lady here."

"My dear sir," urged Mrs. Rushbrook, "you really must excuse me. As I said before, it is quite impossible for me to stay, for the servant has come to say that my aunt has this instant arrived at my house, and go to her I must. Besides, she is accompanied by a gentleman I have not at present the pleasure of knowing, and you will therefore perceive, even if my aunt could be prevailed upon to come, it would be utterly impossible to bring her friend as well."

"Not at all—not at all. Only let the lady consent, the gentleman will follow as a matter of course. They always do. So now you see there is no help for it, and that we positively will not part with you, you may as well say 'yes' at once, and let my son run over with our united compliments to beg the pleasure of the gentleman's and lady's company."

The conversation had been carried on in a tone loud enough to be heard by all in the room, and by Margaret with dismay. The arrival of her great-aunt and the Captain completely bewildered her; they brought back recollections of a painful nature, and fearing that Ellerton might read her secret in her looks, she had some difficulty in restraining her emotion and endeavouring to appear collected.

But before the discussion was ended, and during the time the younger Blissett was absent (Mrs. Rushbrook having at last consented that he should endeavour to persuade her aunt to accept of their invitation), Margaret took an opportunity to slip out of the room, and did not return to it until after she had received audible proofs of his success, and heard her great-aunt's voice, and the Captain's formidable heels, as they came up the stairs.

That Miss Hindmarsh had made a thousand

objections may readily be imagined, and that she had also made a hundred allusions to her dress, she having only just arrived by the long stage-coach, and in a state, she said, not fit to be seen. But as Leonard said she might go "anyhow," and as the Captain rather seemed to jump at the idea, Miss Hindmarsh consented—and after going to her niece's bedroom, came down in about a quarter of an hour afterwards in tolerably decent trim.

The first sight of Miss Hindmarsh was anything but attractive. She was tall and bony. Her face had a look of country air about it, and her dress a cut unknown in London. But then Miss Hindmarsh was her own dressmaker, and as she managed to fit herself tolerably well, the cut may be excused on the score of economy, and the evident pains she had taken to bring in old materials to save the expense of new; so that it required a few minutes to fully master her charms, and an equal time to become acquainted with the salient points distinguishing the Captain.

On entering the apartment, Miss Hindmarsh made three low curtseys to as many sides of the room; and, on Mrs. Blissett's advancing to welcome her, she made a fourth, whilst the Captain saluted the company with an old-fashioned bow, and waited further orders.

Mrs. Rushbrook was, of course, "overjoyed" to see her aunt, and dwelt on her delight so frequently it might have raised a question how far it was real, had Priscilla been less engaged just then in caring for anything but herself. After sinking languidly in a chair, and pulling her scarf a little over her shoulders, she took a large green fan out of her pocket, arranged her curls in a looking-glass opposite, and got up quite an interesting cough by way of informing the company that she was suffering from a severe cold.

Seeing his lady-love safely deposited on a seat, the Captain thought it time to get up a little sensation on his own account.

He had now a chance of making an impression, and lost no time in putting it in execution.

Standing with his back towards the fire-place, and straddling his little legs, the gallant Captain commenced operations, and before Leonard well knew what he was about, he had led him from Brussels to Quatre Bras; had fought and fallen back on Waterloo; stood the pounding of the French guns like a Briton; joined in the grand charge and never flinched; but full of pluck and bounce came off victorious, as he always did.

Fortunately for all parties, supper was announced just as the battle was at its height, and Priscilla was beginning to fancy herself neg-

lected. But as the Captain sat next her at supper and paid her the greatest attention before company, she let him off easily this once; but vowed never to forgive him if he ever stood by the fire-place again, and left her sitting in a corner by herself.

Priscilla, as has been said, sat next the Captain; Ellerton next Margaret, and young Blissett by the side of Bertha; where we will wish them full enjoyment of their meal, and wait in the drawing-room their return.

CHAPTER XVII.

A LITTLE OUT OF ORDER.

SUPPER over, the ladies of course retired to the drawing-room, where it was gratifying to observe the amiable condescension with which Miss Hindmarsh accepted the attentions of her hostess, and the pains she took to make herself agreeable. Bertha was favourably received, and even Margaret had some reason to congratulate herself that her former opposition to her great-aunt had left so little trace of ill-humour behind, that it could hardly be detected under the pleased exterior she wore, as she listened to her dutiful congratulations on her own and Captain Nubbleton's safe arrival.

Miss Hindmarsh was on her best behaviour, and not knowing from Adam at whose house her niece was visiting (for in the flurry of the introduction, and having to pay especial pains to her demeanour, she had not caught the name), she availed herself of the earliest opportunity to eye about her with a view to obtain some insight into the state of their finances from the look of the furniture and the state of things generally.

The drawing-room was charming. The supper had been positively enchanting, and set out in such profusion she thought there must be plenty of money in the case, and that her niece had fallen upon her legs in very good company. Satisfied upon this material point, and delighted to know she was associated with people of gentility, Priscilla determined to show that she was used to the best society, and make herself amiable—if her niece and Margaret only treated her with proper consideration, and received her military beau with respect.

The Captain accepted, and his warlike character admitted on all hands, Miss Hindmarsh gave herself over to the full enjoyment of the evening, and professed herself charmed with the meeting, but dwelt unceasingly on the shabbiness of her dress; spoke of it incessantly, and took pains to make the company understand that she had a magnificent wardrobe at Knaresborough, if she could only get at it.

At last, and after the subject, like her clothes, had been worn threadbare, she took up another equally worn-out subject; spoke of the vanities of life, and the uselessness of mundane bliss; cautioned her hearers against being proud and haughty, and told them to be humble, and to look upon themselves as so many mites in a

cheese, for fear the evil one should ensnare them and draw them to perdition.

She was so particular in pointing this out, and in proving it by example, that Margaret knew she was speaking at her, and that her lecture, though she pretended to make it general, was for the express purpose of making her unhappy.

Stung to the quick, distracted by her grief, and doubly wretched when she reflected that to her great-aunt's letter she owed the principal cause of her sufferings, she was about replying in anything but conciliatory terms, when she heard the Captain and the rest of the gentlemen coming upstairs from the dining-room.

The Captain led the way, slightly flushed with wine, and just come from a hand-to-hand fight with a gigantic cuirassier, who had chopped off three of his fingers, but to whom he had given his quietus by sending his sword clean through him, and made it appear as if he was delighted to join the ladies again, though he would have infinitely preferred remaining where he was.

Smiling with his usual gallantry, he first of all said, "on his honour, as a soldier and a gentleman, it seemed an age since they had left him," then, after bowing profoundly to the lady of the house, he kissed his remaining finger to the fair Priscilla, and taking a seat between Bertha and

her bosom friend, left Miss Hindmarsh bursting with indignation at the monstrous indifference he exhibited towards her.

She was so indignant, and so hurt by his neglect, that she had as good as settled it in her mind to give up all further communication with him, and return to Knaresborough the following morning, when her host approaching from the other end of the room, begged her to excuse their cruel neglect, and so bewitched her by his compliments, that he drove the thought of the faithless Captain out of her head.

"You really must excuse us, my dear madam," said Mr. Blissett, rubbing his little white top of a head, "but the fact is, the Captain is so thoroughly up in illustrating the adventures of a military career, we have no chance with him. This of course is no novelty to you, my dear madam. You have marched with him to the attack, and been obliged to beat a retreat, as well as the best of us. That is to say, you have good-naturedly submitted, only to make your conquest more secure, and drag the Captain a prisoner in your train."

"It is not to be expected," said Miss Hindmarsh, looking rather foolish, and trifling with her fan, "that simply country people like ourselves can hope to escape the penetration of you London gentlemen. You have so many oppor-

tunities of finding out the secrets of society, it would be folly in me to pretend to be ignorant of what you so pointedly allude to. It affords me some happiness to know, that Captain Nubbleton and myself are engaged; and though I have had many offers" (here the fan came into play again), "I have refused to confer my hand upon any man, until I could be satisfied he was of a truly religious turn of mind, and had a heart, built up as I may say, and walled in against the vanities and deceits of a wicked world! I only hope I may not have been too confiding, and that my trustful nature has not been deceived by appearances."

Here another glance towards the Captain so far disconcerted her, that it required a violent wafting of the fan and a good sniff at her smelling-bottle to keep her upright in her chair, when, luckily for all parties, the Captain rose, strutted to the other end of the room, and, after exchanging a word or two with Margaret, prepared to favour Ellerton with the particulars of the siege of one of the many fortresses at which he had been actively engaged.

Annoyed at his ceaseless talk and the way he fastened on his button, Ellerton was forced to submit, though with ill-concealed displeasure at being compelled to appear attentive to him when

he would rather have listened to Margaret and to anything she said than to all the Captain Nubbletons that ever lived.

"If I might venture an opinion," said Mr. Blissett, addressing Miss Hindmarsh the moment the smelling-bottle was done with, "I would fearlessly assert that Captain Nubbleton is a gentleman entirely superior to dissimulation. He is quite above it, my dear madam, though a little pardonable gallantry may of course be granted him. But then he is a soldier, and soldiers we all know——"

"I must beg and entreat of you to spare me on so delicate a subject," replied the spinster. "He is too poor to be permitted anything of the sort, and I must either be thoroughly satisfied of his devotion or I shall certainly give up all thoughts of the object I had in view in coming to town, at great inconvenience to myself, and solely with a view to his advantage."

"It argues well for your future happiness, my dear madam; and I am confident the Captain on his part will think no constancy too great by which to make himself worthy of the sacrifice."

"The sacrifice to which I allude may sound a little odd perhaps, but I have made up my mind to it, and as the Captain has made up his mind to it as well, why——"

"The sooner it is got rid of the better. The moment there is an obligation to be settled between contracting parties, the best way is to make as light of it as possible, so that the feeling of obligation on the one side may be lessened, and the obliger forget that he has done a favour to the other."

"You certainly put it very properly; and though the obligation is all upon the Captain's side, and the sacrifice upon mine, I should not so much complain if I felt certain of his gratitude, and could quite depend upon a suitable return for my consideration. It is not often that a lady of my means marries a half-pay officer, and makes a settlement on him into the bargain. But I forget, I am talking of what I have no right to talk, and it does not become a worm like myself to boast of anything in this sublunary world, knowing of how little value it is, and only meant as a scene of tribulation to fit us for a better."

"My dear," said Mrs. Blissett, interrupting, "you really must not keep this lady to yourself, or I shall be getting jealous, and the Captain will be sending you a challenge. Only think of a staid little lawyer like my husband, and a terrible fire-eater like the Captain, meeting at Chalk Farm, and exchanging shots about a lady! There, go along with you, and never let me catch

you flirting with other people's property before my face in that way again."

Laughing whilst she pretended to be indignant, Mrs. Blissett good-naturedly turned her husband on his heel, and was about seating herself beside Miss Hindmarsh, when that lady, not a little flattered by the allusion to her powers of attraction, said—

"I really beg your pardon, but as I hear you are a lawyer, you are no doubt acquainted with a gentleman with whom I am in the habit of corresponding on affairs of business, but have never seen. His name is Blissett, and if you happen to know him——"

Mr. Blissett rubbed his head at this, while his wife looked at him in astonishment, and bursting into a hearty laugh appeared to enjoy the joke amazingly.

"Why, yes," said he, as soon as his wife had had her laugh out, "I certainly have heard the name before—I may say that I have been acquainted with it all my life, and as one of a large family of Blissetts, I may also say I entertain a great regard for that gentleman, who to my certain knowledge is one of the best fellows in creation, and your most obedient servant."

"You," cried Priscilla, staring first at him, then at his wife.

"I, William Augustus Blissett, of No. 3, Barnard's Inn, London, entered on the Roll of Attorneys, and not likely I hope to do anything to get struck off it."

"Well, if that ain't strange!" cried Priscilla.

"What, the striking off?" inquired the lawyer.

"No. But the idea of your being *my* Mr. Blissett—that is, *the* Mr. Blissett with whom I have been in the habit of corresponding for the last I don't know how many years."

"A pretty confession, upon my word," said Mrs. Blissett. "It's lucky I found you out in time."

"Oh! I don't mean that," cried Priscilla, turning to the colour of mahogany, and diving into her pocket for her fan. "But the fact is, I was so much flurried when I came into the room, and so distressed at having to appear in this frightful dress, I never heard the name—or if I did, I must certainly have caught cold in the coach, and did not make it out properly."

"And your name, my dear madam, if I may make so bold," said Mr. Blissett. "Unless you tell it me, I shall have to send to Barnard's Inn for my letter book, and be forced to spell my way to you. The fact is, that utterly unknown to my wife, I correspond with a dozen or more ladies,

whose faces I have never seen, but whose names are duly registered in the ledger, and a bill prepared against each unfortunate for venturing in my clutches."

"My name is Hindmarsh—Miss Priscilla Hindmarsh, from Knaresborough."

"I ought to have guessed as much by your handwriting. But then you see ladies' handwritings puzzle us sometimes, and I might have gone on guessing for an hour or more and given you up at last—as I often do the letters, in despair—had you not told me. Having only had the happiness to hear you mentioned as Mrs. Rushbrook's aunt, I cannot even plead a fit of deafness for not having sooner expressed my delight at seeing so old a client for the first time in my life."

This was rather smartly said, though Priscilla took exception to the word "old," and did not seem too well pleased with it. She promised, however, to call upon him next day at his office, and made an appointment, so as to be certain to find him there, which Mr. Blissett said he would be sure to be, and that he would hold himself entirely at her service at three o'clock.

The conversation had hitherto been of a strictly confidential character, and confined to the three corners of the room, in one of which Bertha was

engaged in sketching out a life of friendship with Miss Lucy Blissett, and Margaret in another whispering on the sofa with her new found friend, while Ellerton was button-hooked by the Captain in a third, his eyes fixed on Margaret, but forced to listen, and to reply in monosyllables to the Captain's incessant talking, as crammed with a bursting charge, and bound to go off at every convenient opportunity, he talked and talked, and never gave a chance for anybody else to say a word.

Secure of a good listener, and conveniently placed so as to command Margaret's attention, Captain Conroy Nubbleton laid about him successfully, and until Ellerton thought he perceived a favourable opportunity to effect a retreat; but the Captain called him back, and replying to a question put by Mr. Blissett, he hooked him by the button-hole again, and saying he wished to be informed of his views on the subject, without waiting a reply he resumed—

"We will take it for granted, my dear and estimable sir," said he, addressing Mr. Blissett, "and admit that the labour necessary for professional pursuit is apt to interfere with a man's intellectual enjoyment, or even to unfit him at times for his ordinary avocations. But what of that? Has not a military man his perplexities

and cares as well? Is he not liable to be cast down? to be overcome by study, or by too constant application to mental training, does he not run as great a chance of failure in the outset of his profession, as a doctor, a lawyer, or a parson does, in falling off in his?"

"Of course," said Mrs. Blissett. "Nobody denies the necessity for study. But has not the professional man the same difficulties to encounter? And has not a civilian to face, if not a line of bayonets, quite as unpleasant impediments, in a different way?"

"Thus far we are agreed; and no doubt there are incidents in a civilian's life as distressing as the one to which I was about to allude, by way of illustrating my position of what may happen to a soldier." Then, turning to Margaret: "But I beg ten thousand pardons. We soldiers are troublesome fellows, and for the life of us we cannot help talking of our affairs, even in the presence of ladies, who, as a rule, are more inclined to small talk than small arms."

As Margaret smiled consent, the Captain felt himself at liberty to proceed, and taking his place immediately in front of the sofa on which she and Miss Blissett were sitting, he resumed—

"You shall be the judges, ladies, and decide the point between us. I am so confident of your

sympathy, that I entertain a full belief you will at once declare for the army, and leave the other professions to look after themselves—the churchman to aspire to the mitre, the doctor to visit his patients, and the lawyer to go to sleep upon the woolsack, when he gets there."

"You forget that there are others who may hope to find favour with the ladies, besides professional men," said Ellerton, nettled by the Captain's persevering manner, and his consequential bearing. "Men who belong neither to the army nor the church, but who may be thought worthy of a place in society, and quite as acceptable as a half-pay officer, or a needy curate."

"That," said the Captain, "is a matter of opinion; and without presuming to compare purses with you, I would wish you to understand, that half-pay and a gentleman, are better than full pay and a third place in society."

Having, as he thought, completely silenced his antagonist and secured an audience, the Captain first looked hard at Margaret, then turning to Mr. Blissett, he took up the conversation where he had left it off, as though nothing had happened to ruffle his feathers and destroy his equanimity.

"We were talking," said the Captain, "of how far study was likely to undermine a man's constitution, and destroy his fondest hopes in

life. I have a case in point of this. A promising young friend of mine, whose tutor I had lately the honour to be——"

Scarcely had he uttered the words, when he saw Margaret's eyes fixed upon him with a look of such intense surprise, terror, and dismay, he had to pause a moment before he could go on.

"This young man, as I was about to say, full of the highest promise, and upon the point of entering on a career as honourable to his character as a gentleman as it was likely to prove of service to his country—this young gentleman, by a too conscientious discharge of his duties, positively broke down from exhaustion, and for the last two months has been wavering between life and death. Here now is a melancholy instance of the serious effects brought about by study for the military profession, which, operating on a mind already overstrained by recent disappointment in an affair with which I am acquainted, has entirely disqualified him for the least mental effort or the pursuit of the most ordinary occupation."

He could say no more, for, as he turned to look at Margaret and watch the effect his words produced on her, he saw her face turn deadly pale, her eyes bent on him with an agonising,

almost imploring look, then close, as she sank back upon the couch and fainted.

Reproaching himself for his barbarity in speaking as he had done, the tender-hearted Nubbleton repented of his folly, and flew to offer every assistance in his power. He had thought to make her sensible of the grief she had caused his suffering pupil by her fickleness and changed affections, instead of which, he saw that she was equally to be pitied, and was quick enough to perceive that she had either been the victim of some mistake, or had consented to sacrifice herself at others' solicitation.

In the midst of his consternation, and while Margaret, notwithstanding their efforts to restore her, remained as insensible as ever, Miss Hindmarsh called him to her, declaring the shock had proved too much for her, and said that she felt certain she should faint away herself if he did not pay her the greatest attention, and fan her, and hold her large smelling-bottle right under her nose.

This was intended by way of getting up a counter-excitement, and to take off the Captain's attention from Margaret, to whom she recommended burnt feathers and a wet towel flapped across her face by way of restoratives. Should those remedies fail, she advised her mother to

carry her upstairs and cut her staylace, but to be sure and get her out of the room first, and not shock her modesty by resorting to that feminine resource before company.

Holding him with both hands, Miss Hindmarsh kept him so tightly by her side, the sympathising Captain had no chance of offering to carry Margaret on his manly shoulder as he wished to do, and would have been glad to have undertaken even at the risk of spraining himself for life, if Priscilla had only let him. She would not even suffer him to go outside the door to listen or make inquiries, for every time he made the attempt she shrieked and wrung her hands, and said she felt so dreadfully ill she was afraid she should fall upon the floor, which the Captain heartily wished she might do, and not be able to get up again for the next four and twenty hours.

END OF VOL. I.

TINSLEY BROTHERS' NEW NOVELS.

NEW NOVEL BY THE AUTHOR OF "GEORGE GEITH."

A Life's Assize. A Novel. By Mrs. J. H. RIDDELL, Author of "George Geith," "City and Suburb," "Too Much Alone," &c. 3 vols.

Gerald Hastings. By the Author of "No Appeal," &c. In 3 vols.

By Birth a Lady. A Novel. By GEORGE MANVILLE FENN, Author of "Bent, not Broken." 3 vols.

Like Father like Son. A Novel. By the Author of "Lost Sir Massingberd," &c. 3 vols.

Blanche Seymour, a Novel in 3 vols.

Beyond these Voices. A Novel. By the EARL OF DESART, Author of "Only a Woman's Love," &c. 3 vols.

The Queen's Sailors. A Nautical Novel. By EDWARD GREEY. 3 vols.

Bought with a Price. A Novel. By the Author of "Golden Pippin," &c.

The Florentines: a Story of Home-life in Italy. By the COUNTESS MARIE MONTEMERLI, Author of "Four Months in a Garibaldian Hospital," &c. 3 vols.

Baptised with a Curse. A Novel. By EDITH S. DREWRY. 3 vols.

The Canon's Daughters. A Novel. 2 vols.

Schooled with Briars: a Story of To-day. 1 vol.

A Righted Wrong. By EDMUND YATES, Author of "Black Sheep," &c. 3 vols.

TINSLEY BROTHERS, 18, CATHERINE STREET, STRAND.

TINSLEY BROTHERS'

CHEAP EDITIONS OF POPULAR NOVELS.

BY MRS. HENRY WOOD, Author of "East Lynne," &c.

Elster's Folly. 6s.
St. Martin's Eve. 6s.
Mildred Arkell. 6s.
Trevlyn Hold. 6s.
The Red Court Farm. 6s.
A Life's Secret. 6s.
George Canterbury's Will. 6s.
Anne Hereford. 6s.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "GUY LIVINGSTONE."

Sword and Gown. 4s. 6d.
Barren Honour. 6s.
Brakespeare. 6s.
Maurice Dering. 6s.
Guy Livingstone. 5s.
Sans Merci. 6s.

Also, now ready, Uniform with the above,

Stretton. By HENRY KINGSLEY, Author of "Geoffry Hamlyn," &c. 6s.

The Rock Ahead. By EDMUND YATES. 6s.

The Adventures of Dr. Brady. By W. H. RUSSELL, LL.D. 6s.

Black Sheep. By EDMUND YATES, Author of "The Rock Ahead," &c. 6s.

Not Wisely, but Too Well. By the Author of "Cometh up as a Flower." 6s.

Lizzie Lorton of Greyrigg. By Mrs. LYNN LINTON, Author of "Sowing the Wind," &c. 6s.

Archie Lovell. By the Author of "The Morals of Mayfair," &c. 6s.

Miss Forrester. By the Author of "Archie Lovell," &c. 6s.

Recommended to Mercy. By the Author of "Sink or Swim?" 6s.

TINSLEY BROTHERS, 18, CATHERINE STREET, STRAND.

TINSLEYS' TWO-SHILLING VOLUMES,

Uniformly bound in Illustrated Wrappers.

To be had at every Railway Stall and of every Bookseller in the Kingdom.

Broken to Harness. By EDMUND YATES.

A Perfect Treasure. By the Author of "Lost Sir Massingberd."

Netherton-on-Sea. Edited by the Dean of Canterbury.

My Enemy's Daughter. By JUSTIN MCCARTHY.

Love Stories of the English Watering-Places.

Brakespeare. By the Author of "Guy Livingstone."

The Adventures of Dr. Brady. By W. H. RUSSELL, LL.D. (*Times'* Special Correspondent).

Not Wisely, but Too Well. By the Author of "Cometh up as a Flower."

Sans Merci. By the Author of "Guy Livingstone."

Maurice Dering. By the same Author.

Recommended to Mercy. By the Author of "Sink or Swim?"

The Rock Ahead. By EDMUND YATES.

The Waterdale Neighbours. By JUSTIN MCCARTHY.

The Pretty Widow. By CHARLES H. ROSS.

Miss Forrester. By the Author of "Archie Lovell."

Black Sheep. By EDMUND YATES.

Barren Honour. By the Author of "Guy Livingstone," &c.

Sword and Gown. By the same Author.

The Dower-House. By ANNIE THOMAS.

The Savage-Club Papers (2 vols.) With all the Original Illustrations.

Every-day Papers. By ANDREW HALLIDAY.

Breaking a Butterfly. By the Author of "Guy Livingstone."

☞ *The above may also be had, handsomely bound in cloth, 2s. 6d. per volume.*

TINSLEY BROTHERS, 18, CATHERINE STREET, STRAND.

TINSLEY BROTHERS' NEW BOOKS.

Peasant Life in Sweden. By L. Lloyd, Author of "The Game Birds of Sweden," "Scandinavian Adventures," &c. 8vo. With Illustrations. 18s.

Stray Leaves of Science and Folk Lore. By J. Scoffern, M.B. Lond. 8vo. 12s.

Principles of Comedy and Dramatic Effect. By Percy Fitzgerald. Author of "The Life of Garrick," &c. 8vo. 12s.

The King of Topsy-Turvy: a Fairy Tale. By the Author of "The Enchanted Toasting-Fork." Profusely Illustrated and handsomely bound. 5s.

Also by the same Author,

The Enchanted Toasting-Fork: a Fairy Tale. Profusely Illustrated and handsomely bound. 5s.

From Sedan to Saarbrück, viâ Verdun, Gravelotte, and Metz. By an Officer of the Royal Artillery. In one vol.

TINSLEYS' MAGAZINE,

Price One Shilling, Monthly, Illustrated.

Now publishing,

Joshua Marvel. A New Story. By B. L. Farjeon. Author of "Grif," &c. (*Illustrated.*)

The Monarch of Mincing Lane. A New Serial Story. By William Black.

Lady Judith. A New Story. By Justin M'Carthy. (*Illustrated.*)

&c. &c. &c.

The first Seven Volumes of Tinsleys' Magazine *are now complete, price 8s. each. Cases for Binding may be had of the Publishers, or through any Bookseller, 1s. 6d. each.*

TINSLEY BROTHERS, 18, CATHERINE STREET, STRAND.